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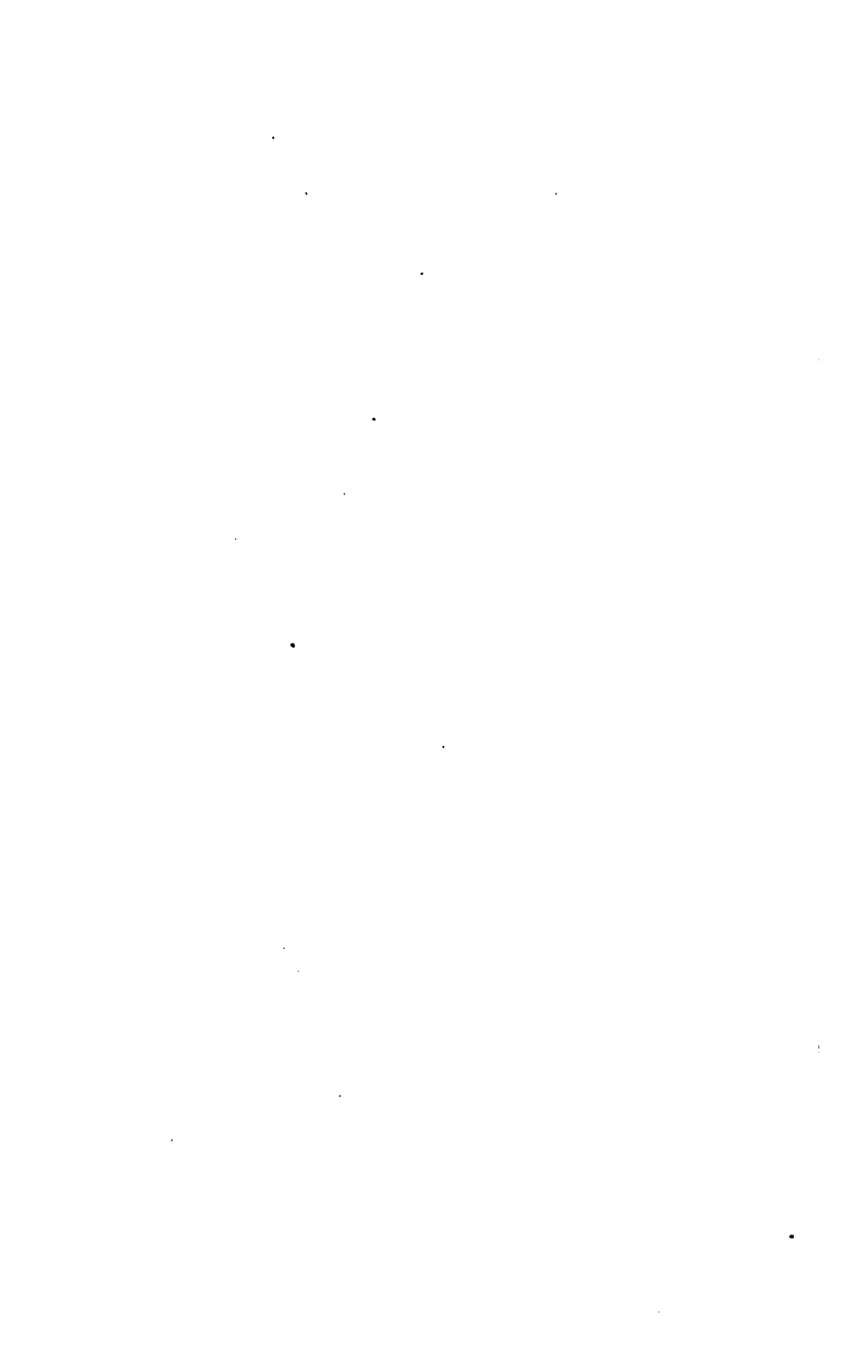
FROM THE BEQUEST

OF

GEORGE EDWARD ELLIS,

Seventh President of the Society.

Received September 13, 1895.



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RELIGIOUS SCEPTICISM

AND

INFIDELITY;

THEIR

HISTORY, CAUSE, CURE, AND
MISSION.

BY

JOHN ALFRED LANGFORD.

LONDON:
JOHN CHAPMAN, 142, STRAND.

MDCCCL.

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Gift of
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TO

GEORGE DAWSON, M.A., F.G.S.

DEAR SIR,

In the life of every man, no matter what his position, there are epochs of more or less individual importance; points of time whence he dates a change in his views, and an influencing cause in his after career. Such to me was my first acquaintance with yourself. To your teachings do I attribute a deeper spiritual feeling, a juster appreciation of religious truth, and a clearer insight into what properly constitutes a religious life. In the following work you will detect much of your own. For this appropriation, while returning my thanks, and making this acknowledgment, I offer no apology; knowing well that you would much rather see your seed thus germinate, than fall upon a barren soil. At the same time, it is but just to say that there is much from which I think you will differ. This has not prevented me from placing your name at the head of the work; your own opinions as to what alone can constitute the right basis of religious union having assured me that such a difference would rather be welcomed, than given as a reason for rejecting this slight testimony of regard and esteem.

But it is not so much for what you have done for me alone, that I am now desirous of thus publicly expressing my thanks. Your work is world-wide, and I believe of the highest importance to man. In this I only speak the opinion of thousands who have been delighted, instructed, and bettered by your teachings. The materialism, scepticism, and irreligion of the age, have ever found in you a stern opposer, a severe rebuker, and a conscientious antagonist. To none, therefore, could I more appropriately inscribe a work which professes, however imperfectly, to investigate the chiefest evil of the day.

This is not the place to speak of private virtues. One word, however, I feel bound to add. To all who know you, they have served to increase their esteem, more firmly to bind their friendship, and to convince them that piety *does not* depend upon opinion, nor a truly Christian life upon orthodoxy of belief.

In conclusion, as a small testimony of respect for your genius, of esteem for your virtues, and of gratitude for uniform kindness and affection, you will permit me to inscribe the following work with your name. Knowing full well that I hereby receive more honour than I confer,

Believe me,

Dear Sir,

Yours most truly,

JOHN ALFRED LANGFORD.

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RELIGIOUS SCEPTICISM.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

INFIDELITY has existed in all times and all nations. Under every kind of religious worship, from the fetishism of the savage to the high spiritualism of the Christian faith, it has had an abiding place on the earth. No people can point to their annals, and declare that in their progressive career infidelity has had no retarding, no accelerating influence. The nations of antiquity afford sufficient corroboration of our assertion. The Bible abounds with evidence. The history of Greece and Rome may be summoned as a witness. The imperfect records—or rather our imperfect system of interpretation—of Egypt, Phœnicia, and nations whose history goes farther into the past than the comparatively modern ones of Greece and Rome, have still abundant proofs of the existence of this constant accompanier of our race. Mahommedanism, Hindooism, and all the thousand and one *isms* which have governed, and which still govern the spiritual life of millions, have all their

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annals of the unfaithful. The phenomenon has ever been a fruitful cause of controversy, both with the sword and the pen. Many a bloody battle has been fought through, and many a mighty tome written upon, its existence. Still the question appears as much unsettled as ever. Our press teems with works upon its present influence. Our pulpits fulminate their thunders against its devoted head, and utter fearful lamentations upon its increase amongst us. Daily do we hear that our institutions are being sapped, our morals depraved, our religion undermined, by its insidious and open attempts. Under a variety of names, we are told, its baneful power is felt in all ranks of society. The emptiness of our churches is cited; the recklessness of a large part of our people upon sacred subjects is adduced as proof positive that we are going to darkness and destruction, through the folly or wickedness, or both, of sceptics and unbelievers. In a thousand forms is this hydra-headed monster devouring his victims daily. Socialism, Communism, Pantheism, Spiritualism, are given as a few of the forms of its manifestation. Revolutions are said to be its immediate production; and anarchy its certain and constant attendant. All the evils which afflict humanity, socially or politically, are proved to owe their potency to this the arch evil. Beneath the terror excited by the constant contemplation of its effects, and the fear of its increasing growth, men become prophets of disaster, and foretellers of ruin.

In this matter, as in most others, a reconsidera-

tion of the whole question will, perhaps, afford a clearer view of its nature, and give us a juster appreciation of its power. On no subject have men talked more wildly, or indulged in more passionate recrimination. Bigotry of faith and bigotry of intellect have striven more for the sake of individual and momentary triumph, than for the cause of truth. Fanaticism has here found "ample room and verge enough" to exercise its peculiarly offensive modes of attack; and its favourite plan of vituperation and abuse. In this discussion the name and teachings of Christ have been used as instruments for goading men into deeds from the bare contemplation of which their natures would have shuddered and their humanity revolted; while philosophy has forgotten its high and holy mission, and descended to be the mean and petty supporter of mean and petty interests. Any endeavour to reconcile the combatants has been met with abuse and reprobation, and the unfortunate mediator has found himself the abused of all, the trusted by none. In such a state are we at the present time. The philosophy and the religion of to-day are opposed. The preachings of our divines, and the teachings of our thinkers are antagonistic. The life of our people is unchristian; their condition still more so. The spirit of God seems to have forsaken our temples and our dwellings. No blessing comes from the former to the latter. Everywhere are our churches pointed at as things outside the people's heart. The priest has

ceased to be the guide, consoler, and teacher of man. Any, rather than their pastor, would the sheep consult. Priestdom has ceased to be a function; its sacredness has departed; and with it, apparently, though we believe not really, much of the Christian life of this land.

Surely something must be wrong somewhere. Believing as we do in the truth of Christianity, and its future application to all the parts of life, we pause and ask ourselves seriously, Why is this? The reasons given are far from satisfactory. They settle nothing. Few of them are at all tenable. It cannot be for the want of preachers; they abound. It cannot be for the want of Bibles; they exist in unnumbered millions, and very often produce a contrary effect to what their distributors expected. It cannot be that the people of this country are parsimonious in supporting religious institutions; they abound everywhere, and millions of pounds are consumed in their support. Reports of Missionary Societies, home and foreign; of Bible distributions to the English cottager and the African Hottentot; of Christian labours in all parts of the world, are every day being thrust upon our notice; and yet our people are ignorant, disgusted, and antagonistic. Never was such an enormous expenditure for such little results; never such an amount of labour for such a wretchedly small amount of fruit. Again, the question forces itself upon us, Why is this? We propose in the following pages

to endeavour to afford a somewhat satisfactory answer.

In the attempt to solve any problem of such vital importance, and upon which so much reason and learning have been employed, the first thing required is that we should have a clear understanding of what we propose to ourselves to do. The words we use should have a clear and defined meaning. In nothing have men so much erred, as in the use of words. Perhaps the chief reason why philosophy has raised so many controversies, in proportion to the number attending the course of positive science, is, that the latter generally has a settled meaning to its vocabulary, and never uses a new word or term without carefully explaining its sense; while the former uses a word now in one sense, now in another, without explaining its different applications. This is unphilosophical in every respect; and is one of the causes why metaphysical study has declined amongst us. So in religious writings. Nothing can exceed the looseness of the phraseology employed. Every writer attaches a different meaning to the same word, and hence confusion, disorder, and chaos. The word infidelity might be taken in illustration. Never has a poor word been so bandied about as this. Every party has used it as a weapon of attack, in all their variety of battles; now meaning one thing, now another. Perhaps, from the nature of the word, and its varying in its meaning according to the varying spirit of the ages, this may

be unavoidable. But every writer when using it should explain his own view of its sense, and the manner in which it shall always be employed by him. This we deem imperative, and before entering upon our history of the thing, shall explain what we mean by the word.

In the religious history of every people we shall find that it undergoes certain phases, corresponding to the progress made in civilization by the respective nation. The people as a body have certain ideas of God, immortality, future rewards and punishments, &c.; these constitute for the time their religious life; and the closeness or laxity which they manifest in actively and daily practising the duties resulting from these beliefs, denote their faithfulness to their own standard of right and wrong, or the reverse. If, as the Israelites professed, men believe in one spiritual God, and make to themselves a golden calf, they are unfaithful—infidels. This, then, we take to be one meaning of the word;—the infidelity of a people to its own idea of truth, at any particular period of its history. This definition of the word applies to the mass of a nation, and is generally named idolatry. We would here make a distinction. Idolatry in a nation which has distinct ideas of a spiritual God, is the outward index of an indwelling infidelity. This, then, is our sense of infidelity in one of its phases;—the faithlessness of a people to its own ideal of God, and the worship corresponding to that ideal. This form of infidelity has always

been mighty in the earth, and never more so than at the present time.

Another form of infidelity is that which refuses allegiance to any religion, and rests in scepticism even about the existence of God himself. Few minds exist in an age who declare themselves thorough disbelievers in His being at all, and boldly declare themselves atheists. These, happily, are a very, very small minority. Yet this infidelity we have amongst us, and careful note must be taken of its presence, as it furnishes us with our second definition, which is, the entire abnegation of religion considered as a worship of God by mankind.

Two other kinds of disbelief may here be noted. The one the result of deep earnestness, of feeling for the interest of mankind; yet totally blind to the only means of securing that interest on a sure and permanent basis. This infidelity is chiefly confined to the speculative and thoughtful. We shall, in another place, inquire into the cause—we have at present only to deal with the fact—that many who from their inmost souls desire to bless the world, and make it far more pure and virtuous than it is; who toil incessantly for their fellow-creatures; who are first in every work of philanthropy, are yet infidels to religion, and oppose its spread amongst mankind, from the same desire, and with the same conscientiousness, as others labour to purify and increase its influence. The other form is that of downright recklessness to all truth, which unhappily exists too much amongst us at the pre-

sent day, and which is, perhaps, the most baneful, and producing the most disastrous results.

In many other forms we may detect the spirit of disbelief. We are far from having made a perfect classification. Our analysis has been general, and the results will be general. However, it may justly be questioned if the four divisions which we have made do not include all the more minute and detailed divisions which can be formed on the question. Under one or other of our four definitions may be arranged all that is needed for the proper understanding and due appreciation of the nature of infidelity, its history, its mission, and its cure. We will now give them in consecutive order.

1. Infidelity exists amongst a people when they are untrue to their own accepted idea of God, and sink below their own standard of religious excellence.

2. That is infidelity which denies religious control, and man's responsibility to God.

3. That is infidelity which sets up virtue, human perfection, or any temporary and mutable power in place of the one and immutable God.

4. That is infidelity which from a recklessness, a love of pleasure, and worldly freedom, looks upon religion as a restraint, and the idea of a retributive God as an idle fancy, promulgated from interested motives, and kept up for purposes of police and social order. In these four categories may be included all the minor distinctions and the varying manifestations of this spiritual phenomenon.

The plan of our work will limit our attention to those countries professing Christianity. Yet let it not be inferred that we limit religion only to its believers, and look upon all that is not Christian as infidel. All nations have enough of that absolute religion which is older than Christ to have in their own hearts a standard by which they may be judged, without our measuring them by one of which they never heard, or having heard have not adopted. A pious, just, and true Mussulman is a religious man, however much he differ from our form of faith and mode of worship. He has enough of the Spirit, and distributes enough of its fruits, to merit the name of a child of God. There is a "light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." By the amount of this with which a people is blest, are we to estimate their religious truthfulness or their infidelity. With them, however, we have nothing here to do. We have enough of the destroyer among professed Christians, and in those nations which have adopted the holy faith, without seeking it in other lands. Christian countries abound with it. The four forms we have indicated above are more or less prevalent, in all their phases, amongst every people. Here, then, we propose to employ our labours, and endeavour to ascertain, by first directing attention to its history, its cause. In this historic survey we shall limit ourselves to Christian Europe; though the nations of antiquity afford sufficient data for a careful and trustworthy narration, and will amply

repay any one for the time and labour he might bestow upon the investigation. The annals of the Jews, the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans, are open to all ; and the facts they afford relative to the constant existence of infidelity amongst mankind are worthy of the closest consideration, and of an unprejudiced comparison with its present condition. Much would be explained that now seems obscure. In treating upon the cause of infidelity we shall have to look somewhat at these ; but this part of our inquiry begins with Modern Rome.

CHAPTER II.

MODERN ROME.

CHRISTIANITY, at its introduction, was infidelity to the existing peoples and their creeds, and their rites. It was entirely opposed to the worship of God as then conceived. With its one declaration, that God is a Spirit, it gave the last fatal blow to all local deities and geographical powers. Before this great and fundamental truth fell the Zeus of the Greeks, the Jupiter of the Romans, and, much more than Christians generally suppose, the Jehovah of the Jews. Here was promulgated the idea which was destined to annihilate Thor and Woden, and revolutionize the whole condition of the world, morally, socially, politically, and religiously. Never was such an anti-conservative sentence to the existing evils of an age as this. Few appreciated its import; and a long series of years have been required before man could at all comprehend the deep meaning that lay in that one utterance. One by one have passed away all the hindrances to religious freedom and conscientious forms of worship. The whole condition of man has been changed by its slow and progressive development. The equality of man, as taught by Christ, has produced the mighty changes which mark the last two thousand

years of man's history. Slavery is passing away to the things of the past. Woman is being elevated to her just position in the social life. Labour has become a dignity, and idleness a disgrace. Through all the varied ramifications of life has this teaching made itself felt. All our thought, literature, art, and science, have been moulded and influenced by its presence. The light and joyous children of the sunny south, the sturdy and rugged minds of the sons of the north, have been guided and directed by its precepts. The lowly Jesus of Nazareth has given laws to the world, and supplied man with the highest aims, ends, and hopes of life, by sowing his seed on an unpromising soil, and there leaving it, where, watered by the dews and rains, and warmed by the rays of heaven, it has grown to a mighty tree, promising to overshadow with its kindly branches the whole family of man. The doctrines he taught to an "evil and crooked generation," to an emasculated and effeminate people, have become the animating and productive inspirers of all that modern life is doing for the improvement and amelioration of man. The bare contemplation of such results from such a cause is full of divine prophecy to all who mourn over the sadness of our now condition, and fear the littleness of the efforts made to produce a change for the better.

Till Constantine patronized Christianity, and used it as a political engine for aiding his own ambitious designs, it was in a struggling and sub-

ordinate condition ; yet were these its palmiest and most glorious of days. All that our faith can do in purifying the heart, in eliminating the virtues of charity, forbearance, and love, was then most powerfully displayed. All that Christ gave as the characteristics of his followers was clearly discerned in their lives and deeds. They were faithful, and "kindly affectioned towards one another," and to the poor wondering pagans who were their persecutors. All they did was done for the "dear love of the Lord ;" and they have left the world a fine evidence of the high capabilities of the human heart, when actuated by the love of divine truth. A model of a Christian community for all times and all ages were they. Constantine came, gave them wealth, built them ornate temples, gave the Holy Spirit another Schekinah than the soul of man, and all was soon changed—all was speedily adulterated with the dust and dirt of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Other spirits than that of their holy founder soon acquired power ; and, saddest of all things, the history of the past had to be again repeated. Men became false to their ideal ; matter overcame spirit, and the kingdom of this world gained firmer hold of the minds of men than the kingdom of heaven. Strife, division, schism, sectarianism, came with prosperity and riches, and with them came infidelity.

It is usual to suppose that during the dominance of the Roman Church division was unheard of, and infidelity had no existence. Their historians have

endeavoured to make it so appear. Never was a supposition more baseless; never was an assertion more unsupported by the truth. Immediately after its foundation it began to be divided in doctrine, and molested by opposers. An apparent unity in its one acknowledged head it had. But its chief teachers mostly taught different and varied doctrines, and much of its boasted unity was of the kind described by our own Jeremy Taylor*; whilst from within and without it continually had to defend itself against the attacks of freethinkers and sceptics. Now attacked openly by the pen of the honest-hearted and truth-loving opposer; now sapped and undermined by the practical infidelity of her own hierarchs and priests, whose lip-profession supported her creeds and her canons, while their lives daily belied, and their private discourse and speculations entirely abnegated, their mass-day, Sunday, and holy festival preaching. Many and mighty were the blows given to the existence of her dominancy before Luther gave that from which she never has and never can recover. Our brief narrative will afford us many examples of this.

After many changes from imperial persecutions to imperial favours; many divisions from heretics within, and from learned disbelievers, such as Celsus and Porphyry, from without; after fulminating anathema and excommunication against each other,

* "Though unity be good, it is by no means desirable that there should be either unity of opinion in the bond of *ignorance*, or unity of profession in the bond of *hypocrisy*."—JEREMY TAYLOR.

according as the Gnostic, the Arian, or any of the many schisms attracted attention and gained proselytes for the time ; after many councils assembled to decide everything, which yet decided nothing, the Church obtained position, wealth, and honours under the favour of the semi-pagan, semi-Christian Constantine. From this establishment upon imperial basis, and under imperial support and patronage, the Church continued to increase her power, to extend her dominion, and to make constant acquisition to the number of her temporalities. Her influence was soon manifest, and her rule felt in all the departments of government, and all the varieties of social life. With outward power, and dignity, and office, came real weakness ; and it may be safely said, that the hour of her adoption by the Emperor, for state and politic purposes, was the greatest calamity that could have happened to the Christian faith ; for what she gained in "outward splendour," she lost in "inward purity,"* and another object than the salvation of souls became her leading characteristic and her deepest spring of action. Close after the first purpled patron of Christianity followed Julian the Apostate, than whom a greater enemy the Christians never had. But it was not from her opposers, but from her children, that the Church now suffered most. Sect on sect arose in infinite progression. We need not be surprised. The old faith and the old philoso-

* Gibbon.

phers still existed—still had their faithful and their interested supporters and followers. These, utterly disregarding the truth of the sayings, that “we could not put new wine in old bottles,” nor “mend an old garment with new cloth,” laboured earnestly and hopefully to blend the new teaching with their old systems. From the unnatural union monsters were conceived and brought forth, with all their “imperfections on their head.” Her prosperity was more disastrous than her adversity. Purple garments were unmeet adornment for the followers of Him who had not “where to rest his head.” The priests who were “clad in fine linen and fared sumptuously every day” were not likely to carry on the work faithfully and truly of those who were commanded to “take no thought for the morrow,” and not “to lay up treasures upon earth.” The simplicity, the love, the kindly-heartedness which distinguished the early disciples, confessors, and martyrs, were giving place to haughtiness and hatred and rancour. It was now become a proverb, “that former times had wooden chalices and golden priests; but they, golden chalices and wooden priests.” Now did “they gape after possessions, they tend lands and livings, they cower over their gold, they buy and sell; and if there be any that neither possess nor traffic, that which is worse, they sit still and expect gifts, and prostitute every endowment of grace, every holy thing, to sale.” Who need wonder that under such a state of things all the vices which have stained the annals of the world

found rapid fruition in the bosom of the Church? With theoretic Christianity was found that practical infidelity, which is always more injurious to religion than all the speculations of the doubting and the refined objections of a sceptical philosophy. Now, as at almost all times and under all dispensations, the greatest enemies to the progress of religious truth, and the greatest hinderers of its universal acceptance, were its professed, accredited, and accepted priests. A pure faith and a vicious life; a holy theory and an unholy practice; a noble profession and an ignoble performance; these are the foes of religion, and their existence together down the "course of time" is the arch infidelity of every age. How deeply did these things begin to penetrate into the heart of the Church after her adoption by Constantine and her establishment as an hierarchy, a corporation, an "imperium in imperio!"

The shock which Christianity received from the eruptions and victories of the Barbarians, and the strength it acquired by their conversion, are matters of general history, and well known to all. They affect not the question of infidelity, and therefore are passed with a single notice. Rome lost nought of the ecclesiastical power which it had acquired previous to their attacks,—rather gained. This was the greatest evil that could befall the accepted faith. The virtues which distinguished its professors in its early and persecuted days, no longer glorified their lives, and made their deaths beautiful. The adding

of acquisition to acquisition, and, after Pepin's first gift, of temporality to temporality, produced its natural result. Quarrels for domination and power, zeal for influence and wealth, thirst for universal dominion, a ceaseless, restless, insatiable worldly ambition, made the centre of the Christian faith the hot-bed of vice, intrigue, and murder. The professed descendants of the lowly Jesus, the teachers of his pure doctrine, the accredited head of his Holy Church, presented to the world a compound of all that desecrates religion, and degrades man. When Gregory the Second wrote to Leo the Ionian that, "all the lands of the West have their eyes directed towards our *humility*; by them we are considered as a god upon earth;" pride, and not humility, was the Roman characteristic; and the Church, from century to century, had in its bosom a worse infidelity than ever philosophy conceived, or scepticism imagined. It were a painful thing to have to enter into details respecting the internal condition of the Church from the time of imperial patronage. With the exception of a few glorious manifestations of its Founder's purity, which were indeed, like "angels' visits, few and far between," and which make us but the more mourn over such mighty powers misappropriated, and such great possibilities unrealized; it were a sad, sad record. Happily we are relieved from such an undertaking!

It would be a strange catalogue were we to give the names of all who attacked Christianity in its early progress; nor would this be just. Few of them were infidels; most of them men of earnest and devout

faith ; many, pagans with a deep and sincere love of the old gods in them,—believers in Jupiter, and followers of Zoroaster, who could not rend from their hearts the religion of childhood, the worship of the gods of their fathers. These men waged incessant warfare against the encroachments of the new teaching, and did vigorous battle for their ancient altars ; they were faithful souls to the truth, as it appeared to them. Not a word of reproach will we cast upon their memories, not a question of their motives will we suffer to escape from our pen. They did what they deemed to be good and right and true ; and—"requiescant in pace."

The history of the Church from the third to the sixth and ninth centuries inclusive would be but a record of what were denominated heresies of one kind or another. The numbers are enormous ; nor need we be surprised at this. After others than the slaves and outcasts of society began to accept the new faith, such results might have been anticipated. The learned proselytes all belonged to one or other of the many systems then extant ; and nothing could be more natural than their endeavours to reconcile their philosophy with their religion. The Jews had Moses and their traditions. The Greeks had Aristotle, or Zeus, or Plato. The Egyptians recalled Osiris and their mysteries. The Persians had Zoroaster. The Northmen added Woden and Thor. Thus was sufficient material existing with which to build many systems of interpretation,¹ and on which to base any quantity of opinions respect-

ing the absolute verity. These may be called exoteric Christians. But the exoteric gave the world a not insignificant number of heresiarchs. The advocates of Homoiusianism and Homousianism, of Arianism, and Tritheism, with the numberless other differences, and shades of differences, have left the world a motley legacy of writings for its edification and improvement. Nor can we wonder at this, when we consider that the inspired Apostles failed to set them an example of unity of opinion, and showed them that the difference of accepting and interpreting a doctrine, led to quarrel and separation. We may not be surprised at their numbers, yet we justly lament the rancour with which they assailed, anathematized, and, too often, murdered each other; yet, though continually stigmatizing each other as such, these were not infidels, nor faithless to Christ, nor enemies to God. Earnest believers for the most part were they; doing, as they conceived, God honour, and Christ service. Still it may be a question of doubt, whether these mistaken zealots did not do more injury to the cause they advocated, than all the professed infidels with all their united labours have ever been able to accomplish.

With the outward condition of the Church elevated, and its power increased, its inward and spiritual condition was changed. From the tenth century it began to exercise a controlling influence over the kingdoms of the world. The hierarchical spirit, which immediately after Constantine became

at once a neophyte and a supporter, now acquired rapid development. In all the affairs of all civilized states her voice was a controlling power which few had courage to resist. The mightiest kings of Europe appeared as feudal serfs of their spiritual suzerain, the pope. While, over the world newly discovered, and all new lands that should henceforth be discovered, the church declared her authority absolute. The infidelity of time and place, which had very early displayed itself, now attained its full development. Pilgrimages were multiplied, and saint-days increased a thousand-fold. From all these the Church acquired still greater power, and still greater wealth. The spirit of the early Christians was entirely changed. The interests of the Church ceased to be the interest of Christianity. The religion which was first propagated by fishermen and tent-makers, was deemed to be insulted, when the Emperor Henry the Third elevated a plebeian to the seat of St. Ambrose at Milan. The lowly spirit of its Founder seems everywhere to have deserted the Church. The one animating idea of all its deeds was aggrandisement. Pride, not humility, became its characteristic. A haughty superciliousness distinguished its popes, its bishops, its nuncios, and all its hierarchy. Possessions, not souls; the kingdoms of earth, not the kingdom of heaven; power, not holiness; authority, not purity; such were the charges which even its own pure and pious children urged against her rule; and from which, though many defended, none could entirely justify. In de-

votion to the Church pure religion was absorbed, and a worse infidelity than a total denial of the existence of a Supreme Ruler, to whom man is alone responsible, existed in the bosom of the Church. Its devotion was external, fast-days and saint-days were observed with disgusting obtrusion. They fasted, not with anointed faces, and joyous demeanour, but with characters written on their foreheads, that all who ran might read, "see how we observe the Lord's ordinances!" All religious life was public; and, with the exception of a few true and devout souls, with which God at all times blesses the earth, anywhere rather than amongst those who professed the cross of Christ might we seek for pure and holy living. The Church of this age was deemed faithful. If so, then no infidelity of speculation, no doubtings of philosophy, can ever be a hundredth part so injurious to the cause of religion as this faithfulness. The infidelity of a church to its own teachings is the worst of infidelities.

This spirit of the Church, as was natural, produced a reaction. From acting as a political power monarchs began to consider it simply as such. The policy which actuated them in their relations with other kings and temporal rulers was now applied to the dominion of the popes, and the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were marked by a complete revolution in their relative positions. Ranke has clearly shown how the temporal powers began to acquire independence of the spiritual. In France the pragmatic sanction gave a blow to pontifical

influence which it never regained. Germany also, though the decrees of the Council of Basle did not produce so powerful an effect, in consequence of the concordat of Vienna, attained a higher position of independence in relation to central Rome than she before enjoyed. The various electors and archbishops claimed and obtained the right of nomination to the bishoprics in their respective dominions. England, without appeal to the pope, exercised this power. Even Catholic Spain and Portugal made similar inroads upon the ecclesiastical affairs of their kingdoms. This struggle even reached Italy, and the Medici were continually braving, and often successfully, the authority of the head of the Christian Church. The spirit for the acquisition of temporal independence had taken possession of the hearts, and guided the policy, of all the European princes. The same spirit also animated the Church. To her spiritual dominance she sought to attach temporal principedoms, and to participate in the political affairs of the world. This struggle was productive of the greatest crimes with which the annals of the world are stained. The sixteenth century saw the court of Rome stained with every vice that can degrade humanity. The holy palace, the residence of the Father of the Faithful, became the theatre on whose stage deeds of the blackest dye were perpetrated. Open assassination and secret murder were daily occurrences. A territory desired, a person in the way, were sufficient reasons for employing the steel or

the cup. "Every night," says Ranke, "were the corpses of murdered men found in the streets; none dared move, for who might not fear that his own turn would be next?" What theoretical infidelity could ever effect such injury to religion? It was a practical denying of God. While his holy name was ever on the lips, a deadly demon ruled in the heart, and every deed was a manifestation of indwelling faithlessness and atheism.

From these horrors we gladly turn. One sentence of Ranke's upon them contains a lesson for all times. It is worthy of the deepest meditation, especially at a time when such earnest efforts are being made for the restoration of church authority. He says, "there was but one place on earth where such deeds were possible,—that, namely, where unlimited temporal power was united to the highest spiritual authority, where the laws, civil and ecclesiastical, were held in one and the same hand." May we be wise enough to profit by the lessons of the past!

The national, like the individual mind, cannot endure a too long tension. Relapse of one kind or another must inevitably follow too much excitement. The laws of our being will never be violated with impunity. If we neglect voluntarily to observe the required conditions of well-being, we shall be forced to obey them,—it may be with smarting and pain. Nature ever rights herself. History has ever taught this lesson; man has scarcely ever been sufficiently wise to apply it. Thus the annals of

the world are a continued repeating of man's ineffectual strugglings against the laws of the universe; and the constant re-assertion of their eternal verity and rule. So in the question before us. We see eras return: their outward manifestation necessarily changed, but their spirit one and the same. The first epoch of the Christian faith was unitive. Then succeeded an epoch of dissension, disunion, sects, and schisms. The sixteenth century again saw unity. But alas, it was no longer the unity of knowledge, of love. On the one hand it was "the unity of opinion in the band of ignorance;" and on the other, "the unity of profession in the band of hypocrisy." Schism was absent, but infidelity was present. The absence of true religion in the lives of the heads of the Church, led to its natural result—infidelity in theory. We now come to an epoch when the precepts of Christ were publicly preached and promulgated by men who, in their literary privacy and social convivialities, laughed at all that was sacred, and holy, and pure. Men, who but a few hours before had officiated at the altar, and performed the holiest administrations of religion, were to be heard ridiculing the faith that believed in their truth and efficacy, and uttering doubts as to the existence of a Supreme Judge, to whom man was responsible for the "deeds done in the flesh." A sensuous materialism had taken possession of the ecclesiastical hierarchs. A cold, sen-

sational philosophy had well nigh obliterated the pure spiritualism of Christ. Epicurus was the favourite teacher; and Lucretius the laurelled poet.

"Tangere enim et tangi, nisi corpus, nulla potest res,"

became the doctrine of men who openly professed "to walk by faith and not by sight." This, in the most generally-received acceptation of the word, may be called the epoch of infidelity in the Church of Rome. The immortality of the soul was doubted by men who declared themselves followers of Him who said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life." Purer ideas of God, and firmer faith in the life to come, warmed the soul of heathen Plato, than animated these "Christians" of the sixteenth century. "While," we again quote from Ranke, "while the populace had sunk into almost heathen superstition, and expected their salvation from mere ceremonial observances, but half understood, the higher classes were manifesting opinions of a tendency altogether anti-religious." Thus at one time reigned omnipotently both the infidelity of ignorance and the infidelity of intellect; the former, from interested motives, fostered and increased by the latter. What faithfulness still existed was to be found mostly outside the Church. Priesthood had become a trade, and God's holy teachers had to be sought for amongst the laity. It was during this decadence of religion in the Church that the noblest works of art the world has ever seen were achieved; and their workers wrought consciously and avowedly for God.

The same period which saw on the papal chair an Alexander the Sixth, and a Julius the Second, which received its philosophy from Pomponazzo* and Peter of Mantua, also boasted Raphael and Angelo. So strangely and closely are often linked deep faith, and absolute infidelity. Unfortunately the faith here was with but few; while infidelity was, in one form or other, the characteristic of the age.

We have now brought our review of Modern Rome down to a period of reaction. The natural results of such a systematic hypocrisy on the one hand, and of superstitious time and place worship on the other, soon manifested themselves. Dissolution, licentiousness, and debauchery were everywhere corrupting the youth and destroying the aged of both sexes. The bases of society were being continually sapped. Virtue was a subject of derision. Honesty was turned bare-backed upon the world, while successful knavery lived in affluence and luxury. From such a state it needed the strong voice of Luther to rouse and agitate the world. The time needed such a man; and he was there. The philosopher, reason-

* For an account of Pomponatius and the school of Padua, see Hallam's *Introduction to the Literature of Europe*, vol. i., chap. 4. p. 435. This author in another part of his work, speaking of the characteristics of this period, says, "Among the classes whose better education had strengthened and developed the acuteness and intelligence so general in Italy, a silent disbelief of the popular religion was far more usual than in any other country. In the majority this has always taken the turn of a complete rejection of all positive faith."—*Ibid.* vol. i. chap. vi. p. 504.

ing from cause to effect, may deem him the natural consequence of a vicious age acting upon a virtuous and truly pious mind ; but the religious will see the hand of Him who never deserts the world He has created ; nor allows Himself in any generation to pass unwitnessed.

The effects of Luther's attacks and teachings were instantaneous and beneficent. The supporters of the Reformation possessed all the faith, zeal, and earnestness which always distinguish a new religious party ; while its reaction upon the old was productive of unexpected results. Many of his charges it was impossible for the most prejudiced to deny. Grievances were promised to be redressed. Reform was a common word in the mouths of ecclesiastics. Abuses were everywhere discovered. The popes confessed what a heavy labour was entailed upon them by the neglect, the errors, and even the wickedness of their predecessors. Thus, while the German monk added to the believers men who had never before payed tribute to religious truth, and drew others, daily, from a worse state than professed and open infidelity to an active and energetic belief, he also necessitated a restoration of the ancient agreement of life and teaching, of heart and head, in the members of the Catholic Church. The reaction was eminently spiritual. Loyola founded his order ; and never has the world witnessed more self-sacrifice, more earnest labour for God, than marked the early course of the members of the Society of Jesus. What they afterwards became ; what they are

now ; this is not the place to inquire. But in their endeavours to Christianize the world, there never have been truer and more devoted soldiers of the Cross.

But reformation is a thing more easily talked about than effected. To restore to pristine purity the corruption of a long series of years is no light task ; especially when the earnestness of the workers is checked by interest, by party, and custom. Reforming popes are always an anomaly. Hadrian the Sixth astonished the world with the announcement of his intention to restore past virtues, and destroy present vices. He believed himself in earnest, and worked as if he could change the world from its protesting humour. How vain the task ! The Augean stables were there, but no Hercules. The old and strongest infidelity reigned in the hearts of the Reformers themselves. The Church, not Christianity, was their object ; the aggrandisement of the papal authority, not the teachings of Christ, was their text ; the establishment of priestly domination, and the subordination of the world to the influence of the Vatican, the end of their labours, not the elevation and amelioration of man. Conclave tyranny, not spiritual freedom, was the wish of their hearts. Thus, notwithstanding a few changes effected in the working of the papal court, and a few abuses reformed, the world beheld, and history has to record, the same infidelity of intellect in the hierarchs, and the same infidelity of ignorant and superstitious worship in the people, despite the ex-

ternal attacks of Luther, and the internal reforms of the popes.

The instrument employed to effect their purpose is a sufficient corroboration of their faithlessness to the spirit of the Christian religion. Not by purity of living, not by abolition of abuses, not by sacrifice and self-denial, not by presenting to the world the fair and goodly example of a pure and holy church, did the popes endeavour to restore faith, and godliness, and love. Like the purpose for which it was used, the weapon was purely carnal; the sword of civil power was invoked by the vicegerent of Him who declared his kingdom not to be of this world; and "they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." In the name of the Prince of Peace, all the potentates of earth were invoked to draw the sword. Treaties and counter-treaties, intrigues and counter-intrigues, promises and threats, assurance of eternal salvation, or the certainty of eternal damnation, were all in turns held out to induce, or to terrify, emperor, and king, and people, to fight the "battle of the Lord." No wonder that, under such auspices, Rome continued, of all places in the world, to be the most vicious, the most debauched, and the most irreligious; the centre of faith, the hot-bed of infidelity.

From this general charge made against the capital, of the Christian world, it is pleasant to be able to make individual exceptions. Though the learned members of her community were for the most part unbelieving, and religiously hypocritical, there were

some pious, faithful souls, who mourned over the Church's decadence, and groaned over the condition of religion, from their inmost hearts ;—who confessed the evils, yet shrunk from the fearful alternative of being church reformers, and heretics. To those familiar with the history of the Church during the sixteenth century, the names of Bembo, Contarini, Valdez, and Pole, will immediately suggest themselves as a few who, amongst others of less distinction, preserved a deep and vital faith, amidst a frivolous and unbelieving generation.

It is seldom that a greater contrast has to be recorded, than that which existed between the condition of Rome at the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries, and that of the end of the sixteenth. A complete social revolution had taken place. The flagitiousness of manners had changed to a frigidity of decorum, and a punctiliousness of observance, which, connected as it was with a hollowness within, was equally revolting. A grave, severe, and religious aspect was the visual dress of the Church. It assumed and exercised over all the affairs of life a strict surveillance. None were too high, none too humble, to escape its scrutiny. Jealous, vigilant, and censorious, it possessed alike the power to condemn, and the will to punish. Yet, amidst different manifestations, the spirit was the same. It was still false to truth. The genius of the age was towards scientific discovery. On this it laid the finger of condemnation, and the progress was retarded for years. It

dreaded that man should have any other interpreter of God and his laws than the Church, and was cunning enough to see, that with enlightenment and truth their reign would pass away, and "be no more for ever." Hence, the development was crushed in the bud, and ban and excommunication hurled against the daring soul who should be bold enough to utter the truths which he had discovered. Oh, never was infidelity greater than this! never had God greater enemies than the Levites and priests! All history confirms the assertion: and the powers which bound down the heart of Telesius, which tortured Campanella and burned Bruno, show that the most faithless to truth are those who profess to be its teachers and supporters. The very fact of the establishment of the Inquisition is a sufficient example of the character of the age, and a lasting monument of the infidelity of the priests who organized, and the people who tolerated, such an awful instrument of persecution, horror, and blood. By this awful institution the spirit of investigation was almost quenched. None dared trust the evidence of his senses, or obey the dictates of reason. The holy record of God's handiwork was a sealed book, in which none dared to read. It was truly a reign of terror; everywhere distrust, suspicion, fear. The sacredness of home was no protection, and even the inviolability of the confessional was a delusion and a lie. No Church of Rome, no religion; no Pope, no faith. To this all things were made subservient. To this insatiable Moloch of power were

sacrificed love, truth, faith, charity, religion. In the name of religion was religion persecuted and tortured. Even art, which the Church had taken under its protection, was bound down by the tendency of the age. The glory of Raphael, the sublime freedom of Angelo, were departed. Their existence was impossible with the Grand Inquisitor in prospect, and his myrmidons everywhere. The beauty of the one, and the boldness of the other, were succeeded by the heaviness of Guerino, and the terrible realities of Domenichino. The souls of Caraffa and Alvarez seem to have inspired their subjects and guided their pencils. In their pictures, we find the "horrible expressed with needless frequency, and without the slightest mitigation. We have the St. Agnes of Domenichino, with the blood starting beneath the sword! Guido has set the Slaughter of the Innocents before us in all its atrocity—the women with their mouths all open, pouring forth shriek on shriek—the savage executioners whose hands are died with the blood of their victims! * * * * Guercino has depicted Peter Martyr at the very moment when the sword cleaves his head."* Perhaps nothing illustrates the condition of the times better than this manifestation of the bloody spirit of the Inquisition in the works of art. How far must this have influenced the character of the people, how deeply must it have penetrated, to have reached so pure and powerful a soul as Guido's! I remember

* Ranke, History of the Popes.

some years since seeing one of his Madonnas. The remembrance of that picture has never, and never can pass away. Such heavenly purity; such confiding piety; such a halo of seraphic loveliness; was beaming round that heavenly face, that I could have become idolater, and bowed down before such transcendental grace and holiness as was there depicted. Yet this man found inspiration in themes of blood, and delight in scenes of slaughter. In such times, well might it be said that it was "scarcely possible to be a Christian, and die quietly in one's bed." *

At such a period, fidelity would consist in rigidly observing the edicts of the Church, no matter how vicious the life; infidelity in striving to stay its soul-withering power, no matter how holy and pious the life of him who dared to say, "thou doest wrong."

Spiritual tyranny and a healthy, active piety can never exist together. Where there is a rigid and punctilious observance of ceremonial there will always be a laxity of practice, and an hypocrisy of outward conformity. A free, wholesome, and vigorous faith can never be collateral with an In-

* The spirit which actuated the reforming popes may be seen from the following quotation from Hallam, than whom a more impartial writer upon this question could not be adduced:—"No earlier pope had been more alert and more strenuous in vindicating his claims to universal allegiance, nor, as we may judge from the well-known picture of Vasari in the vestibule of the Sistine Chapel, representing the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, more ready to *sanction any crime that might be serviceable to the Church.*"—HALLAM, INT. LIT. vol. ii. chap. ii. p. 91.

quisition in the same country. When orthodoxy is judged by attendance at church, by regularity of confession, by assiduous outward appearance of devotion and attachment to the Church, instead of by purity of living, it is worse than folly to talk of the religiousness of a people and the holiness of a nation. Such was the condition of Rome and her Italian dependencies, in the seventeenth century. None dare inquire, none investigate. Reason was bound in worse fetters than ever Aristotle had been the unconscious cause of placing on the mind of man. Woe to a people when its Galileos are cast into prison, and forced to be infidels to the "god which is within them!" Woe to a people when all its forces are employed to crush the spirit of truth, and bind the soul in chains of priestly domination! When philosophy is branded as the offspring of the devil, and science as atheistical; then is man dishonoured and God blasphemed. "Woe to the crown that must the cowl obey!" says the poet; but it is greater woe to a people when its gifted are Inquisition victims, and its active minds are necessitated to spend their energy and consume their strength in frivolous pursuits and idle trifles. Of all infidelities this is the archest; of all atheisms this is the most mischievous, the most impious, and the most degrading. In such a state of practical atheism was the Roman court at the time of which we write. Men who declared themselves, and by the larger part of mankind were believed to be, the interpreters of God's will to man; the dispensers of

heavenly mercy, or the instruments of eternal wrath, founded their conduct not on the teachings of Christ, but the doctrines of Machiavel. Their *vade mecum* was not the New Testament, but the Prince. We may believe, with Rousseau* and others, that this infamously immortal work is the greatest enemy tyranny ever had, and is, *par excellence*, the book of republicans. This will not affect the question at all. The world received it for what it professed to be, and rulers carried out its precepts as injuriously for the world as if written for that especial purpose. He may have been an enemy of tyrants and a hater of tyranny; but certainly no single author ever afforded despotism so valuable a text-book as the Prince, and no opposer of Christianity ever produced anything so hostile to the merciful spirit of that gentle faith.

In a country like Italy, governed as it was during the seventeenth century, with its system of priestly espionage penetrating everywhere—in temple, in theatre, in market-place and private dwelling; with its secret and irresponsible power of punishing with torture, the axe, or the stake, the slightest delinquency committed against the papal interpretation of orthodoxy, it is not to be expected that any direct antagonists of Christianity should be found†.

* “En feignant de donner des leçons aux rois, il en a donné de grandes aux peuples. Le Prince de Machiavel est le livre des républicains.”—ROUSSEAU, *CONTRAT SOCIAL*, lib. iii. ch. 4.

† “If we limit ourselves to those who directed their attacks against Christianity, it must be presumed that, in an age when the tribunals

What the world usually stigmatises as infidelity would find no abiding place in the countries subject to the dominion of the Church. The intellect, which might have employed itself in sceptical speculation, had always the ghost of a Dominican, or the image of a Familiar haunting its career. This was a sufficient cause for silence as to its doubts, and a powerful reason for being conformative to the Church; though we doubt not that opposition to Christianity, and a philosophical doubt touching the existence of a God, would have received much more leniency than an attack upon the papal see, and a question about the infallibility of the Pope. Nothing is sadder than this prostration of the mind. Naturally curious and prone to inquiry, we may be sure that the terror must indeed be great, and the oppression vigorous in the extreme, that can crush the development of the intellect; or force it to evaporate in idle songs and frivolous entertainments, for the gratification of corrupt and licentious courts. Such was the condition of Italy under the pontificates of Clement VIII., Paul V., Gregory XV., and the other pontiffs who governed the Roman world during the present (seventeenth) century. The few Italians who, either from the dread of spiritual despotism; from pure and conscientious doubts; or from a repugnance to any religious control whatever, professed their disbelief of Christianity, were necessitated

of justice visited, even with the punishment of death, the denial of any fundamental doctrine, few books of an openly irreligious tendency could appear."—HALLAM, *INT. LIT. EUROPE*, vol. ii. ch. iii. p. 138.

to shield themselves under the protection of foreign powers, where greater toleration was allowed, and freer inquiry met with less persecution and restraint. Thus Vanini and Rugieri, whose works, trials, and death have afforded so much room for controversy, lived in Paris. It is true the first was burned as a heretic at Toulouse; yet in Italy he would have been unable to have published that for which he was burned in France. Perhaps no greater proof could be given of the vassalage of the intellect to the central power of the Church than that afforded by the following passage from Mosheim. He is speaking of the French congregation of Benedictines. He says, "Those who are acquainted with the history of learning need not be informed how much this institution has benefited the literary world, or what a multitude of excellent and immortal works it has produced, illustrative of every branch of learning except *philosophy*." Little hope could there be of true religion and spiritual freedom characterising a people, when "there was no end to the prohibition of books in Rome; first, those of the Protestants; then all writings reflecting on the *morals* of the clergy, or the *immunities* of the Church; every book departing, in however slight a degree, from the Roman tenets, and the entire works of any author who had once incurred censure."* Under such restrictions we need not be surprised that superstition should distinguish the people; or that gross sin,

* Ranke.

which is infidelity, should coexist with much outward observance of rites and ceremonies. Italy, the seat of the pontificate, was, in an age remarkable for crimes and fearful displays of human wickedness, the sink of nations, and the abomination of humanity.

Nothing more clearly displays the true spirit of Rome than the manner in which she attempted, in this century, to recover from the blow given to her power by Protestantism, and to extend her influence over the world. St. Paul says that "he was all things to all people." Rome bade her missionaries give wide enough interpretation to these words. They truly became all things to all people. With a faithfulness to the Church or order far exceeding their fidelity to Christ, everything was lost sight of in their endeavours after aggrandisement and power. Morality, truth, honesty, were considered as small sacrifices compared with the addition of a new proselyte, the conversion of a heathen, or the reclaiming or destruction of a heretic. In China, Christianity was Confucianism; in Persia, they found a teacher in Zoroaster. In India, forgetful of the glorious, but awful truth, that "God is no respecter of persons," Christ was the supporter of castes; a Brahmin or a Pariah as circumstances seemed to require, in order to ensure success. In party-divided Japan, they joined the dominant factions, and sullied the pure and holy name of Jesus, by invoking his aid in barbarous massacres, and partizan butchery. From such a desecration of his faith the

Christian would turn with horror; yet were all these subjects of praise, themes of glory, and causes for *Te Deums* and high masses, as tending to the honour of God and the extension of Christianity. Need we wonder that Italy became what it did, and continues what it is, under the rule of such faithful infidels!

Evidence on evidence might be adduced of the faithless condition of the Church at this period. The Bull *Unigenitus* contains in itself more than sufficient for this purpose. This Bull was issued in the beginning of the eighteenth century, in the year 1712. You have only to read it, to learn indeed that the spirit of the Holy One had left the sanctuary of Rome. Christ's teachings of love and mercy are entirely forgotten amidst the howl of anathema, cursing, and condemnation. The power to bless seemed departed; and those who professed to hold the keys of heaven gave the world ample proof of their willingness to be the door-keepers of hell. Weak, helpless, and shattered, the same spirit which produced the daring and not altogether unjust Hildebrand, now exhausted itself in empty threats and impotent excommunications. When a church becomes a cursing church, it is the most blaspheming of all, for it invokes the name of God to do the work of the Devil. It becomes the plaything and mockery of the world. The powers which swear by it treat it with contumely and contempt. Its authority has departed. False to its own teachings, those who acknowledge it use it for their own pur-

poses, and when it dares for a moment to become troublesome, visit it with the same neglect and indifference which always await, and are the meet rewards of, all time-servers and flatterers. Claiming the mastership of the world, we have seen it stand, tiara in hand, at the chamber doors and *levée* rooms of petty princes, begging their help in the cause of the Lord. Her own foster-children have practically declared her unfitness, and more than once has the world beheld the head of the Catholic Church forced to become the lackey of poor temporalities and the wretched kingdoms of this world. History is a strange teacher ; and awful lessons are engraven on her record. One there is, full of awe, yet how full of hope, which ever utters to nations, as to individuals, Be false to your own ideal ; be faithless to " the god which is within you ;" and your lot shall be woe, woe, and evermore woe ! Such lesson has history ever taught ; and such lesson she teaches now. With every departure of ancient purity, we have seen depart the power, the control, the influence of the Roman Church. From being above all monarchs and rulers ; from the proud and noble position which enabled her in palmy days to exclaim to some potent tyrant against the rights of his fellow-beings, as Nathan of old exclaimed to David, " Thou art the man ;" she has become the tool of tyranny, and the sycophant of tyrants. Poor, decrepid, and tottering, she now exists upon sufferance, and foreign arms are needed to guard the palace of her ruler, who is a fugitive in other lands,

an outcast from his own *. No lesson on the page of the annals of the past can be more significant than this. An able writer says of the Church at this period, "It is because this pretended passion of the Christian spirit in the eighteenth century is nothing more than the passion of an image. The Church has stripped the Cross of its spirit, and nobody is transported, nobody groans for an inanimate wooden image. The order of the clergy wished to supplant in the dark the God of the Gospel ; and it believed, one moment, that the world would be the dupe of this mask. It sat down upon a Golgotha of silver and gold ; it stretched forth both its arms to pleasure and avarice, and by this imitation, after having rejected the Gospel, it thought that the earth would take it for the *crucified Saviour*." †

The history of infidelity in Italy presents a phenomenon peculiar to that country and Spain. What is usually understood by that word, scarcely finds an abiding place. We are unable, as in other countries, to give a chronological arrangement of great names, whose sceptical writings influenced the religion, philosophy, politics, and social condition of the nation. In early times, the terror of the papal hostility, and the means it possessed of giving practical effect to that hostility, served as a sufficient check to the free exercise of thought, and totally prevented the free utterance of conviction. Afterwards the Inquisition supplied the loss of papal power, and became a more inexorable enemy to

* Written in 1849.

† Quinet.

everything in the shape of free inquiry than even the Pope himself. Under such a state of things, all the historian can do is, to endeavour to seize the spirit which animated, and the council which directed, the worship and thinking of a people at any given period in their history. We have endeavoured to do this impartially and correctly. With the exception of the period which almost immediately preceded the Reformation, the infidelity of Italy has been not theoretical, but practical; an infidelity, not of the head, but of the heart. With an outward profession of the most ardent faith, and making all efforts to establish the conformity of the world to that faith, everywhere was there a vital abnegation of the truths of Christianity. Our progress will show that this is not confined to the Roman Church. It is only more apparent there, because the spirit of the corporation more thoroughly possessed that Church than it has ever done any other; and the evils attending that spirit are more clearly manifested in the perfectibility of its system. Had it been faithful to its own standard, the world had, perhaps, never witnessed the disintegration which has been the peculiar characteristic of the history of the last three centuries. The Church, as a corporation, has lost, but mankind has won, by every loss of power which the priesthood has sustained. Here rests its grand and arch infidelity. The spirit of Christianity is freedom, progress, truth, and justice. The practice of the Church has been oppression, retrogression, falsehood, and injustice. Based upon

such a sandy foundation, it could not endure. With the arms of this world it struggled long, and with a perseverance worthy of a better cause, against the new spiritual forces which were at work in the hearts of man, producing inquiry, assertion, opposition, and, finally, destruction of its soul-withering influence. Signally has it failed in all its endeavours. The souls of men had been bowed down to a pseudo-theocracy too long ever to sleep after once awaking. Pauses, relapses, there might be, but never a return to the old worn-out system of corruption, oppression, and infidelity, which a cunning and "lying Church" had long palmed upon the world as a beneficent, generous, holy, and faithful hierarchy of God-endowed and heaven-appointed teachers and guides. Denying the individual inspiration of the faith of Christ, and practically ignoring the "light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," they mistook for the rock of St. Peter a poor and base-sapped hill of externals, rituals, outward ceremonials; the lip-conformity of the world, for the spiritual uniformity of free and intelligent believers. Fatal mistake! False to the higher feelings of man, they expected man would be true to them, and blindly consent to be for ever the child of an unfruitful and exacting stepmother, the subject of an authoritative church. What a lesson has experience taught to those who will but open their eyes to her teaching! From the first assertion of the great infidelity of the Church, has its power continually decreased, until, at the present hour, it has

reached the "grand climacteric" of declension. The events which have recently occurred all corroborate the charge made against this Church, all prove her deep unfaithfulness. What do we now behold? A pope a refugee; and a cardinal government forced upon an unwilling and antagonistic people, by the bayonets of a foreign power. A spiritual court requiring for its very existence the sustaining influence of the "arm of flesh;" the "kingdom not of this world" running about, and seeking aid from the force that it should entirely abnegate. Alas, alas! what a scene this to offer to the eyes of the world! What awful blasphemy to write upon its edicts, and proclamations, and œcumenical letters, and bulls, the "name of God, and his Son, our Saviour," &c. Archest of all infidelities, for its presumptive aggressions are all done for the "glory of God, and the advancement of Him whose right it is to reign." The great heart of humanity is not thus to be deluded. Ages may pass in darkness, but the sun will shine at last. Sleep may seize the world for a time, but the awakening will come. The noise of evil spirits may drown for a time the "still small voice" of God; but it will be heard; and woe to the power that has dared to be the suppressor of truth, and the withholder of the true bread of life from the hungry hearts of men!

Let us now briefly sum up the results of the present chapter. Infidelity, as usually understood, has scarcely existed under the dominion of the Roman Church. That infidelity which denies the

existence of an overruling Providence, or of the truth of a Revelation, never exercised much influence in modern Italy. The reason of this we have seen. In its place, however, infidelity, more injurious to true faith, more antagonistic to morality, more oppressive to the soul, and more hateful in the sight of God, has exercised a mighty and awful power, in all the affairs of life. The falseness of a church to its ideal has effected all the evil that could possibly result from a denial of God, and man's responsibility to Him for the "deeds done in the flesh." We have seen under its domination a clerical hierarchy, proud, haughty, flagitious, licentious, and at times openly atheistic. We have seen a nobility professing to follow the dictates of the Church, and calling themselves servants of the Most High, commit deeds of the most horrible nature, winning for themselves a fame which will link their names for ever with the Neros and Caligulas of old pagan Rome; whose orgies, under the rule of Jupiter, have never exceeded those celebrated in modern Rome, under a governance which boasted of its apostolic descent, and used the name of the Holy One of Nazareth to sanctify murder, rapine, spoliation, and lust. We have seen a people sunk in the lowest depths of ignorance and superstition, living in a state of religious worship to which the lowest fetishism were preferable, inasmuch as the savage is true to the light which is his, and worships the highest power of which his uncultivated intellect has conception.

We have seen orders of men uniting together for the furtherance of their own advancement, and using every art, intrigue, and system of chicanery, that a subtle intellect and combined scheming could suggest; and at the same time cloaking their purposes under the garb of a pure and simple religion. We have seen men who united for the express purpose of preaching the Gospel of Christ, and for restoring the world to the primitive and apostolic purity of faith, sacrifice every virtue that distinguishes the believer from the reckless, for private gain, or societarian aggrandisement. The same body of men, united under one and the same head, acknowledging the same rule, and professing to follow the same guide,—now declaring the right divine of kings in rigidly monarchical countries, now declaring their amenability to laws; and even advocating the policy of assassinating heretic rulers. In Switzerland republicans; in Spain severe monarchists; in China the favourers of pure despotism, and a paternal rule of the patriarchal kind, which gave the father the power of life and death over his children. Everywhere have we seen purity sacrificed to policy; Christianity to the Church; God to the Pope; and Christ made the mere instrument of temporal advancement, aggression, and political encroachment, or, what was far worse, the invisible power, in whose name was forged the strongest chains of spiritual vassalage that ever weighed down the growth of the mind, and restrained the progress

of the race. In a word, the history of modern Rome is a sad, sad evidence, that, under a strong profession of Christian truth, and a boasted purity in Christian faith, may exist, and practically be developed, the worst kind of infidelity by which true religion has been assailed, and the belief in a pure and holy God, who mercifully watcheth over the humblest of his children, been adulterated and defiled. Before this infidelity of the faithful, all philosophical and speculative scepticism is harmless, nay, beneficial. The one is stagnation, corruption, and death; the other is inquiry, doubt; but it may lead to an activity which may purge, though with gall and wormwood, an unthinking and besotted generation; though it pass through the "valley and shadow of death," it may lead its votaries at length to the banks of the blessed river of life and immortality. The united testimony of the deepest thinkers of all ages has confirmed the truth, that atheism itself is less hurtful to a people, than a profession of the letter, with a heart and life dead to the spirit of religion, whose fruit, according to the Apostle*, "is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." From no annals are afforded such evidence of this truth as from those of modern Rome. In all countries is it true that "a true unbelief is far more easily overcome than a pretended belief."†

* Paul to the Galatians, ch. v. ver. 22, 23.

† Menzel, German Literature.

Our review will also warrant the deduction, that a "true unbelief" is at all times to be preferred, and is always more beneficial to the morals, manners, and life of a people, than a "pretended belief."*

* Romanism has yet lost not a tittle of its intolerance and arrogance. Take the following specimen from Father Newman :—"The Established Church has no claims whatever on us, whether in memory or in hope; they only have claims upon our commiseration and our charity whom she holds in bondage, separated from *that faith and that Church in which alone is salvation.*"

CHAPTER III.

FRANCE.

THERE is a peculiar monotony pervading the early history of all people. Though, from influences of race, clime, religion, and other circumstances, nations have attained the most diverse positions, and arrived at the most discordant results when compared with other nations ; yet shall we find that all have passed through nearly the same phases, and suffered the same transformations under similar influences. We have only to look at any people at present in a state of formation, and making progress towards a consolidated civilization, to be able to note the changes and vicissitudes which the great and civilized nations of to-day have experienced in their upward career. First, we have savagedom, with its tribes, and continual wars ; then, the conquests of the most powerful, and the wisdom of the farthest-seeing, produce amalgamation of diverse tribes under one head, forming a unitive body-politic of an hitherto widely-separated people. In modern times, a new element of the most important character has produced the most important results. This element is Christianity. The acceptation of this power into the State marks another, and the most important epoch in the history of a people.

Then follow the struggles between the old faith and the new, and the final subjugation of the former to the latter. With its triumph commences a strange phenomenon,—that of theological controversy, and doctrinal diversities. Then the final subordination of the diverse opinions, in theory if not in reality, to one ritual, creed, and ceremonial. The age of church dominance is now entered upon; and all confess one head, bow before one central authority as the receptive fountain of divine grace, and the only possible channel for its communication to the world. For a time controversy is partially stayed, and conformity is the leading characteristic of the period. The progress of learning; the intercommunication of nation with nation, for commercial and political purposes; the clashing of interests; and the tendency of absolute power to produce arrogance, negligent security, and corruption in its possessor,—lead to questioning, doubting, discussion, controversy, disintegration, and revolution. Through all the former courses, scepticism has scarcely breathing room in the world. Men are either too earnest, or too besottedly devoted to a superstitious ceremonialism, to be moved by a scarcely-whispered doubt, or swayed by an inuendo of scepticism. But in the last period, inquiry becomes bold and daring. Men shudder at the thralldom in which they have been bound. Extremes produce extremes. Slavery thrown aside, anarchy and licence are almost certain to be the primary accompaniments of suddenly-acquired freedom. In

spiritual matters the result is the same. An overstrained chain removed from the mind leaves it without an anchor on which to repose ; and in the assertion of its inherent right to liberty, it too often disavows all restraining power, human or divine. When the cataract is removed from the eye, the light of day for a time will only dazzle, perplex, and confuse ; and, if the restored sight is left to its full influence, will probably lead to blindness again. So it has been in the religious world. A rigid authority has always been followed by its entire renunciation ; a Puritanic piety has always been succeeded by licentiousness, irreligion, and vice.

France, like most modern European nations, has passed through all these phases. After her adoption of the Christian faith, she soon became the most zealous supporter of the Church. Her monarchs were "Most Christian," and "Sons of the Church." Yet from this very zeal proceeded the indirect cause of the ruin of the Church of Rome. Her kings were the first to make the Pope a temporal prince. They first linked the kingdom of this world with the kingdom of God, and pronounced a union holy which Christ had declared to be the contrary. Nor was it long before the natural irritability of the Gallic mind was at discord with the power they had done so much to establish. Her clergy revolted from the unlimited authority of the Father of the Faithful ; and demanded and obtained immunities for the Gallican Church, which

exercised great influence on the course of events, in France. The mind of the nation thus left in a state of partial independence produced the most marked results ; and it was long problematical whether Protestantism or Catholicism would be the form of worship which the State would adopt. Nor was it till after many years of bloody struggle, of awful civil war, intermingled with revolting massacres, that the triumph of the old Church was effected, and then it was very far from being complete. But how different the results of its triumph in France from its triumph in Spain ! Instead of producing a cold and lifeless uniformity, as in the latter country, it led to a scepticism and infidelity in morals, religion, philosophy, and manners, unparalleled in the history of the world. In all parts of life was its influence felt. It had ceased to be the speculation of secluded philosophers, and became the adopted profession of a people.

In France we are able to trace its course with certainty. Its rise, progress, and development, is there sufficiently clear to enable us to give a consecutive narrative. Nor are we limited, as in the case of Rome, to the spirit of the nation at the particular time spoken of. In France, though its origin was due to the faithlessness of a priesthood to its teachings, and to the discrepancy between their precepts and practice, it appeared in a different form, and under different manifestations ; and how different its results ! If not healthy in its on-going, how full of promise for the future ! It may be said that the in-

fidelity of France was rooted in faith, though it denied its cause and cure. Infidelity to the Church was fidelity to man. Opposition to the teachings of the Church was a preparation for the triumph of the teachings of Christ.

While the Roman Church exercised her rule over the countries of Europe, and watched with extreme jealousy all endeavours to emancipate either the mind or body from her now gentle, now iron-like control, it was not to be expected that many should profess opinions directly irreligious ; and still less that any books containing anything antagonistic to faith should appear. The power which knew so well how to punish the slightest departure from her orthodox standard, would not fail to be equally successful in her attempts to prevent the appearance of aught entirely contradictory thereto. Yet, notwithstanding all the vigilance of her ubiquitous emissaries, enemies stole into the camp, and, under the garb of philosophy, openly denied, or secretly undermined, the first truths upon which, not only the Church, but religion itself is based. This, as we have seen, first began in Italy, where Pomponazzio and others, in their metaphysical teachings, laid the basis for the after development of theoretic and practical disbelief. These doctrines soon spread into other countries, and in France received early welcome, nourishment, and growth. The name of Vallée will occur to all familiar with ecclesiastical history, as one who paid severely for saying his say upon this subject. Vallée lost his life in 1574, for

having written a small pamphlet which the ruling powers declared atheistic. Historians have also added Bodin and Charron to the list of writers who attacked religion in France during the sixteenth century. The last-mentioned is author of two works, entitled, "*Des Trois Vérités*," and "*De la Sagesse*." Of these books, I can only speak from the analysis given of them by historians. The full title of the former * appears to indicate anything rather than infidelity. But the scarcity of most of the works of this period, renders it unsafe to speak with certainty upon their character. There is one author, however, of this century, whose works are intimately known in every country, to all who make the least pretence to acquaintance with literature—the *Essays of Montaigne*. We cannot rank this writer among those who have directly attacked religion; but his indifference, his light and playful scepticism, have, perhaps, done more to produce the present carelessness of the world on this subject, than the more presuming efforts of more philosophic doubters. His work having been endorsed by the world† has entered into the life of every nation. No people, no literature, is free from the influence of its spirit. The pleasure derived from its perusal causes a re-perusal, until unconsciously we adopt its tone, and carry its principles much further than their

* "*Des Trois Vérités contre les Athées, Idolâtres, Juifs, Mahumétans, Hérétiques et Schismatiques*."

† "This book of Montaigne the world has endorsed."—EMERSON'S REPRESENTATIVE MEN, Montaigne the Sceptic.

author would have allowed, and into places from which he would have prohibited their entrance. Nothing can be more inimical to a vitalizing faith than conventional conformity and careless attention to its outward observances. Everything which tends to generate such a course, while it leaves the mind dead to the spirit of the religion professed, is a more deadly foe to its adoption by the world than an open and avowed enemy can ever be. Zeal is not a thing to be trifled with, nor enthusiasm to be destroyed by a sneer. It is a question of doubt whether writings like Montaigne's are not more calculated to produce complete Pyrrhonism than those of more direct assailants to truth, either philosophical or religious. The "*que sçais-je ?*" is, perhaps, a stronger weapon than "I deny." Indifference is at all times more to be dreaded than a zealous opposition. We can arm ourselves against the one, but are not sufficiently fortified against the other. Besides, Montaigne charms and delights. While reading him, we feel that all things are uncertain ; and the eternal "*que sçais-je ?*" is ever on our lips. Strange is the potency which he exercises over us. We are led away willing captives to his bland open-heartedness, and feel that we have found at last frankness and honesty. Afterwards, we have our doubts upon the propriety of choosing for our guide, friend, or even companion, a man who relates his vices in the same openness, and with apparently the same carelessness of their effect, as he does his virtues. At first, it seems a rare *bonhomme* ; a

feeling we should endeavour to cultivate, so attractive, so charming does it appear; but then the question arises, whether this very confession does not result from a careless indifference to the distinction which should ever be made between the two? If a man confess his faults and vices, acknowledging them to be so, we feel that he has a sense of the vital importance of virtuous practice to the world. But when he exposes to the eyes of the world his failings with as great a gusto as his praise-worthy actions, we feel that something is wanted to make him a true teacher to man. Hallam has well said, "It may be deemed a symptom of wanting a thorough love of truth, as much as when he overlooks the difficulties he deals with. Montaigne is, perhaps, not exempt from this failing. Though sincere and candid in his general temper, he is sometimes more ambitious of setting forth his own ingenuity than desirous to come to the bottom of his subject."*

I have dwelt longer upon Montaigne than, perhaps, the very cautious nature of his scepticism would seem to warrant in a general history of this subject. But I have done so advisedly. The publication of his *Essays* marks an epoch in the history of literature, and they have exercised a most important influence over the subsequent history and philosophy, not only of France, but of Europe. The spirit which he first raised has received renewed vigour

* Hallam, *Intro. Lit. of Europe*, vol. ii. chap. iv. p. 175.

from authors less scrupulous than he, and who carried his principles to those extremes from which his own careless and indifferent nature would have held him securely distant. His moderation, and love of ease, could never have accorded with the fanatic doubting of authors who have, since his time, attacked all established institutions and beliefs, and who received their impetus from his lively, *naïve*, and charming disquisitions. The indirect importance his works have had on the mind of the active world, must be an apology for dwelling so long upon them, and for awarding to them a somewhat different character to that usually current.

The freedom which the Reformation gave to the mind, and the emancipation from authority consequent upon that event, was, as might well have been anticipated, followed in many cases by a total abnegation of all religious rule, and an utter denial of all positive truth. This spirit was very early manifested in France. The wretched condition into which its religious life had fallen during the sixteenth century, perhaps more than the German protest against papal domination, prepared the way for the vast increase of infidelity which characterized France more than any other country during this period. It had now become a subject of general complaint. The thoughtful and pious, what few of them were now existing to speak or write in favour of religion, mourned over the condition of their country with evident pain and sorrow. The court of Louis XIII. was particularly distinguished by its

presence. It had become fashionable to laugh at sacred things, and make a joke of the mysteries of the creed which was then professed by the profligate monarch and his still more profligate courtiers. All things were silently preparing the way for the future uprising of the French people, which produced such glorious, and yet such terrible results in the eighteenth century. Here again, as in Italy, was a church false to its principles, and a people in superstitious faith, or total neglect and indifference. But in France freedom of thought had made some progress; there was no Inquisition; philosophy was more unfettered in its speculations; and science had more liberty to pursue her investigations. Hence the doubts and denials, which in the one country were naturally confined to the heart that experienced them; or uttered only in secret confidence of friend with friend; or, what was still worse, and more general, displayed in a reckless and licentious life, and a practical disregard of all moral as well as religious restraint,—found for themselves a more open, and, in the end, a more safe mode of getting themselves expressed. Charron we have already mentioned. The Italian Varrini, and his horrible death at Toulouse in 1619, upon the charge of atheism, has been noticed in our last chapter. To these names may be added La Mothe le Vayer, whose *Naudœana* contains sufficient evidence that their author was a sceptic in religion, as well as in philosophy. Guy Patin and Naudé also betray, in their

writings and correspondence, how deeply they were impregnated with the same spirit. The two latter were the friends of the great Gassendi; and there is some reason to believe that the latter entertained somewhat similar opinions. "La Mothe le Vayer," Hallam says, "was habitually and universally a sceptic."* Philosophy now begins to play a more active part on the theatre of the world. The early part of the seventeenth century was distinguished for its great men in this department. When we come to treat of England we shall have to revert to this subject again. Bacon commenced that system which afterwards produced the sensationalism of Locke. In France, on the contrary, Descartes gave prominence and permanence to a system of idealism; both of which, carried to their extremes as they have been by their respective followers, have produced the same result, a complete and daring Pyrrhonism. Starting from opposite points, the same goal has been reached by both parties. This will become clear as we proceed. We shall have, in our history of infidelity in France, sufficient opportunities of pointing out this fact. In no country has the sensational philosophy been carried so far, and produced such results; and though Germany has more extravagantly developed the theory of idealism, the land of its birth has not been altogether free from its wild speculations and intangible conclusions; though

* Hallam, *Int. Lit.* vol. iii. chap. iv. p. 339.

more modified by the prevalence of its antagonist, and the peculiar character of the French people, in every respect so different from the German.

No country has exhibited the varied phases of scepticism so fully as France. Let not the Protestant attribute this to the Roman Catholic power subduing the forces of the Huguenots, and thus preventing that country from deriving the advantages which always result from the existence of a zealous, struggling, and active body of dissentients from the established forms of worship. Their causes are deeper than this: France was infidel not because of Romanism, but in spite of it. She was false even to her own ideal. The reign of Louis the XIV.,—notwithstanding the external splendour which his exhaustive conquests seemed to spread around his throne; in spite of its literary eminence; its boast of being the Augustan period of its history; the possession of such sons as Corneille, and Molière, and Racine, and Boileau, and a host of others, whom the world will not willingly let die;—the whole state of France, was corrupt to its centre. All the outward glory which hung around her was but the “purple and fine gold,” which a blind hierarchy had thrown over a rotting and unseemly corpse. Infidelity was dominant everywhere: in the court, the Church, the mart, in one shape or other, was it an active and influencing power. Silently was the unholy life of France preparing the way for the mighty men of the eighteenth century, whose works shook her to her very founda-

tion ; who hastened, though they did not produce, the revolution which still remains the astonishment, the wonder, the enigma, of the world. The condition of this ill-governed country may be summed up in a few words. There was a court without honour ; a nobility without nobleness ; a clergy without religion ; a *bourgeoisie* without virtue ; a people sunk into the lowest state of ignorance, superstition, and vice ; the victim and prey of the ruling powers. The councils of the king were swayed by prostitutes and adulteresses. The only way to royal favour was by a total abnegation of all conscientious scruples, and an entire recklessness of religious control and moral conduct. The vices of the aristocracy were imitated by the next in rank ; whence the contagion spread through all the limbs and members of the State. The orgies which distinguished the age of Louis XIV. and Louis XV. are such as to make the heart shudder at such a degradation of humanity as they display. The accounts left in various memoirs are revolting in the extreme. Our only wonder is that, with such leaders, France held together so long. We cease to be astonished at the awful scenes which marked the great revolution ; for they assume a more potent signification than when interpreted as the wild ebullition of feelings generated by a denial of God, and his governance of the world. They become the awful expiation of violated vows ; of offices neglected ; of assumed functions unfulfilled ; of trusts misused. They are the terrible punishments

of popular indignation against a reign, or rather succession of reigns, of false kings, false priests, and false rulers. Restoration is clearly legible in their on-goings; though, like the mighty laws of nature, they paused not to discriminate between the guilty and the innocent, but in their denunciations against the godless tyranny which had exercised dominion over themselves and their country, these blind instruments of divine vengeance swept away all who opposed their path, in indiscriminate executions, or still more indiscriminate and savage butchery and massacre.

The eighteenth century was distinguished in France by the writings of three of the most variously-endowed men that the history of literature records;—their power so different, yet, in the end, tending to the same result. One grave, sententious, epigrammatic; leaping at results, and overthrowing the wisdom of ages in a sentence. Another scornful, withering, witty, sarcastic, specious, and shallow; meeting all things with a sneer, and opposing all with a scoff; a people-despising demagogue; a monarch-flattering courtier; a Protean power; now bowing down to a “Pierre le Grand,” a “Catherine of Russia,” a dolt-headed “Frederic of Prussia;” now lashing courts and kings with an overwhelming amount of irony and scorn. At one time a palace-loving flunkey; at another a fierce and hasty republican. Writing essays, dramas, epic poems, histories, dictionaries; and in all gifted, powerful, and scoffing. A giant among pigmies,

a god to men who had nothing nobler to worship. The third sensitive, irritable, eloquent, and sophistical. A republican in politics; a rationalist in religion; a Platonist in philosophy; a lover of ideal beauty; a child of nature spoiled; in his own wild way, a worshipper; susceptible of the most varied impressions; yet withal, loving and to be loved. These three men moulded the minds of their susceptible countrymen as they willed, and produced results, the consequences of which may not yet be foreseen. Need we say we mean Montesquieu, Voltaire*, Rousseau? The latter, indeed, can scarcely be classed as an infidel. He stands in France as the head of the rationalists†.

* Those who may doubt of the truth of this character of Voltaire have only to read a few of the many books written by this prolific author. His "Pierre le Grand," his correspondence with the two sovereigns named in the text, will supply sufficient evidence of his flattery to kings, even despots, when it served his turn. His tragedy of "Brute" contains republicanism of the first water. His letters tell us too clearly what a friend the people had in him. Ever varying, he was only faithful in his least attractive phase, his love for laughing at what men deem most sacred and holy. Infidelity has little reason to make a boast of having to number Voltaire among its list of "great men," who have "not bowed the knee to Baal."

† Rousseau prides himself especially upon his belief. See his letter to Voltaire, where he makes this belief an object of boast, ascribing thereto his superior enjoyment of life. I give his words,—
"Je ne puis m'empêcher, monsieur, de remarquer à ce propos une opposition bien singulière entre vous et moi dans le sujet de cette lettre. Rassasié de gloire, et désabusé des vaines grandeurs, vous vivez libre au sien de l'abondance; bien sûr de votre immortalité, vous philosophiez paisiblement sur la nature de l'ame, et si le corps ou le cœur souffre, vous avez Tronchin pour médecin et pour ami: vous ne trouvez pourtant que mal sur la terre. Et moi, homme obscur,

We have linked these three names together, not so much from their common resemblance to each other, as from their forming an epoch in France. They were all followers of the sensational philosophy of Locke, which now numbered such mighty names amongst its professors in this century. Condillac, D'Alembert, Diderot, and the other writers of the "Encyclopédie," were all sensationalists, and, what the founder of the system never was, materialists. Open and avowed infidelity was now fashionable. Religion was a thing antiquated. Piety might have done for their ignorant and simple grandmothers ; philosophers were above such folly. Faith was an idle word, when applied to religion ; yet strange to see what these despisers of spiritual truth would put up to supply its place ; while they rebutted faith, exercising a larger amount than the poor deluded creatures whom they ridiculed and despised. For religion was set up some political tenet of their own, on which depended the misery or happiness of the race, according as it was adopted or rejected. For belief in God, some naked virtue, some theory of perfectibility, was substituted, and all who did not bow down to this new deity were declared superstitious, priest-ridden, irrational, unworthy of the freedom of mind for which these seers of a new dispensation were struggling and toiling.

pauvre, et tourmenté d'un mal sans remède, je médite avec plaisir dans ma retraite, et trouve que tout est bien. D'où viennent ces contradictions apparentes ? Vous l'avez vous-mêmes expliqué : vous jouissez, mais j'espère ; et l'espérance embellit tout."

We believe in perfectibility ; believe in its being the goal which we all should strive to reach ; but these sages of the eighteenth century ignored the only means by which man can ever gain its sublime promise. Man, as was afterwards potently and palpably proved, cannot worship "goddesses of reason," and does not "live on bread alone."

It would be useless to enumerate the names of all who, in this century, accepted and adopted the new creed according to Voltaire. It was now beyond individual, and become a national profession. Yet one name stands out prominently amongst the host, for the extravagance of his philosophy, and the wildness of his scepticism. This was Helvetius. In his work "*De l'Esprit*" are united all the extravagances of Hobbes with the atheism of a Frenchman. Never was the system of sensationism carried to such extremes as by this pseudo-philosopher. "*Se ressouvenir c'est sentir ;*"* "*juger n'est proprement que sentir ;*"† "*l'esprit peut être considéré comme la faculté productive de nos pensées, et n'est en ce sens que sensibilité et mémoire.*"‡ Everything to him is to feel. He knows of nothing which we cannot feel. Morality is but utility. "*Dans tous les siècles, et dans tous les pays, la probité n'est que l'habitude des actions, utiles à sa*

* To remember is to feel.—T. i. diss. i. chap. i. p. 207.

† To judge is properly only to feel.—T. i. diss. i. chap. i. p. 284.

‡ The mind may be considered as the producing faculty of our thoughts, and in this sense is only sensibility and memory.—T. i. diss. i. chap. i. p. 285.

nation."* Moral law, religion, honesty, all the virtues, become utilities. Vice, if it were useful for individual or national security, becomes, by such a philosophy of utilitarianism, metamorphosed into a virtue; and all absolute law of probity, truth, justice, vanishes into thin air. O tempora! O mores! Poor France! with such teachers, succeeding such priests, no wonder thou becamest what thou didst, and remainest what thou art!

The fearful storm, which had long been gathering over France, and often, unheeded and unregarded, had cast its shadow before, burst upon this devoted country with awful fury at the end of the last century. The faithlessness of the Church, the infidelity of its philosophy, had, united with political disaffection, produced their not unnatural results. Retribution was at hand. The eyes of the long deluded were opened, without their understandings being improved. A power was invoked which nothing could exorcise until its awfully sublime mission was carried out. It is a great error to suppose the horrors of the Revolution attributable to infidelity. Atheism was rather an effect than a cause. The centuries of misrule in the State, and of falsity in the Church, had produced this utter abnegation of religion. Men long blind may not suddenly look upon the sun without danger of again

* In all ages and in all countries probity is only the habit of the actions, useful to its nation.—T. ii. diss. ii. chap. xiii. p. 190. Helvetius says in another place, "tout se réduit donc à sentir." Everything, then, is reduced to feeling.—T. i. diss. i. chap. i. p. 207.

becoming blind, even from excess of light. Such was the condition of Frenchmen at this period. The ruling powers under the rapid-changing courses of the Revolution, were as much the subjects of terror as the sufferers. It was, indeed, a reign of terror. But neither Danton, nor Marat, nor Fouquier Tinville, nor Herbert, nor Robespierre, was at any time its king. They were as much slaves to the spirit of the age as the meanest wretch who suffered on the all-expiatory guillotine. Neither atheism nor atheists had generated the Revolution; nor is the infidelity which characterized the times responsible for the horrors perpetrated. As well might the Bartholomew massacre be laid to the charge of religion. They were both, more than is generally expected, caused by fanaticism of faith; the one by a religious, the other by a political dogma. Unity was the grand object of the Catholic party, which led to the first; unity, that led to the latter. Catholic unity is to be produced at any price; what matter a few thousand heretics' lives, compared with the importance of the object to be attained?—republican unity, and brotherhood of man, the great thirst of the actors in the last immortal drama. Weighed in this balance, all obstructions, all difficulties, must be swept away, though the loss of millions of lives be the consequence. No great truth has progressed in this world unless baptized in blood. It is a fearful alternative; but men, reasoning from such premises, and having such an accumulated load of injuries to redress; a new state of

society to establish ; a new order of things to create ; were not likely to pause in their career, nor be nice about the means used for obtaining their ends. Far be it from us to assert, that the ends justified the means. Evil can never be justified. We must be content to acknowledge the evil ; and grateful to receive the good which a wise God deduces therefrom. But this we fearlessly assert,—that the horrors of the revolution ; the September massacres ; the daily murders by the guillotine ; the worship of reason in the person of a prostitute ; the atheism ; all the evils of the time accumulated together ; were less terrible, less hopeless, less injurious to the world, than the state of France which preceded the eruption. The one was sapping all the bases upon which society rests ; the other was preparing the way for a renewal of faith, for the purification of religion ; for the entire amelioration of the condition of France. It was truly a terrible preparation ; but we can scarcely see how otherwise it could have been effected. The ground was ploughed in hypocrisy, falsehood, and licentiousness ; the seed was sown in blood ; but let us hope that the harvest may be reaped in faith, in trust, and religion.

We have rather chosen to give the general spirit of this epoch, than to individualize the names of those who stood at the head of this period of infidelity. It would give little pleasure, and less profit, to enumerate the names, and quote from the writings of the savage atheism of Marat ; the obscene Herbert ; the raving Collet D'Herbois ; and the

lovely "angel of the Revolution," the bloodthirsty Couthon. From such men and their teachings and speeches we turn with disgust; and feel an evident relief in breathing, if not a pure, at least a less dense atmosphere than that which surrounds the names of these "honourable men."

The philosophy of this period was, as might well have been anticipated, entirely material. The names which stand out from the miserable crowd of these opposers of religion were utterly insensible to the beautiful in religion; to the spiritual in philosophy. Mirabeau was an atheist. The Gironde, the noblest body of men France then had, were completely absorbed in the spirit of their age. Condorcet may be placed at their head, and will sufficiently indicate the tenour of the belief which was held by this remarkable and notable body of men, with their queen and glory, Madame Roland. Their early deaths prevented them from fully developing their system; and, perhaps, from embracing one nobler, more spiritual, and more in accordance with the high objects for which they struggled and died. At the tail of these may be mentioned the cold deism of Robespierre; the carelessness of the witty Camille Desmoulins; and the recklessness of the "no trembling" Danton. With such men for her rulers, the state of France in a religious point of view may be easily imagined, and her condition clearly known.

The material school of philosophy continued dominant during the Consulate and Empire. Napoleon

himself, if we may believe Bourrienne, had little sympathy with this school; but the savans of his period were entirely devoted to it. Nor could much be hoped for a religion restored by a despot, for the purpose of consolidating his own power and riveting more firmly the chains which he was forging for the world. This "scamp Jupiter," with his incapability for appreciating any spiritual system of belief, saw means for more firmly establishing his power in the institution of the Church, and the want of man for some outward expression of his indwelling religiousness, and made these two forces alike subservient to his individual purposes and self-aggrandisement. Religion, under such circumstances, could not be very pure or vital. Except that anything were better than national atheism, and worship of reason, there was little difference between the non-faith of the Revolution and the faith of the religious Restoration under Napoleon. A church which, at the dictation of such a man, had to bow, and cringe; to bless bayonets and sanctify cannons; was little calculated to make any salutary impression on the minds of a people always quick to detect discrepancies; though not equally skilful to remove the incongruities. We need say nothing of the Restoration.

The political faith of the Revolution made an indelible impression on the mind of men. It has survived the guillotine, and outlived the reign of terror. That part of it which was Christian could not die. Like its Master, it is immortal. No changes, no revolutions, can destroy it. The false-

hood of its votaries, the virulence of its antagonists, are alike impotent. Thus, the idea of brotherhood, first taught practically by Jesus, is still a vital and animating principle. Its rejection by the Church, its practical ignorance by the professing Christian, had led to its adoption by those who deny its origin. Ever the work of God will be done. If the believers neglect it, unbelievers will arise to take it up. Thus the school, now so widely known, and so much dreaded, of socialists, in their thousand varieties, now declared themselves the restorers of man's golden age; or rather the creators of a new one, such as has yet never blessed the world. These men, taken in the aggregate, are not religious in the usual acceptance of the word. Some of them are atheists, like Proudhon; some are a kind of pantheist, like Cabet; some have a diluted Catholicism of their own, like the gifted and benevolent Lammenais; some, like Louis Blanc, leave the question of religion alone, and view man's redemption in a social aspect only. Amidst such a jumble of conflicting theories is France at the present time. Such a state of complete disintegration perhaps no poor nation ever witnessed before. Of the whole body of these teachers it may be said that, however benevolent, man-loving, and sincere they may be, they have little faith in religious influence and spiritual forces for the elevation of man. With all their various theories, they practically ignore Christ; and, while endeavouring to give practical efficacy to the teachings of the "lowly one of Nazareth," they, like Peter

of old, deny their master ; and, like one of their own body, place his name between Julian the Apostate, and Catiline : crucifying him again, in spirit, between two thieves*, as did the Jews, in body, on Calvary hill two thousand years ago. Such is the condition of France in a religious aspect, at the present day. Taken as a whole, the people are indifferent to religion, and entirely untouched by religious influence. They are not of the Church, nor in the Church ; nay, they are opposed to the Church. And the great question amongst the deepest thinkers of France is how the Church and the people may be reconciled, and religion once more become a vitalizing and all-embracing power.

The philosophical tendencies of France are in every way more cheering. The influence of German literature has been good in that country, whatever its effects may have been in others. The sensational system is losing ground, notwithstanding the materialism of Cabanis, and the realism of Le Comte. The French philosophers will not altogether believe that the "nerves make the man," nor give entire adhesion to the principle, that only the "seen is the real." In an indirect way, Michelet and Quinet have done much to restore faith in something more than money-bags and Bourse scrip. Eclecticism, with Victor Cousin at its head, has restored a better system than Condillac's, Condorcet's, or Cabanis's. This spirit is

* George Dawson.

spreading, and gaining strength daily. From its progress, we augur a better era for France than any that has ever yet been chronicled in the history of "la belle France."

We have now written what appeared to us necessary upon the history of infidelity in France. To have traced it through all its manifestations; to have enumerated every author who has written upon the question, and at all to have analyzed their works,—would require a volume of no inconsiderable size, to itself. This would not have been in accordance with the plan of this work; my object being rather to afford a synoptical view of its history, in order that the question might have somewhat of a completeness, than to enter into a minute and detailed account of every infidel and sceptic, which would have been as onerous to myself as uninteresting to the reader. Enough has been said to enable us to form somewhat of a correct opinion of its progress and effects in France, and to show that in no country has it obtained more power and influence. At different periods it has existed there in all its forms. We have seen the Church infidel to its teachings; the people false to its own ideal. We have seen the infidelity of intellect and the infidelity of ignorance; the disbelief of theory and the disbelief of practice. Both have culminated in France to a degree they have never attained in any other country. In Germany, as we shall see in the next chapter, the infidelity has been of a very different kind, and has produced very

different results. But history affords no example, except France, of a nation, whose senate has decreed, and whose people have substantiated, the decree, "That there is no God!" In this respect, France occupies, certainly, the not enviable position of setting an example to the world. God grant it may be very slow in following such a leader!

CHAPTER IV.

GERMANY.

THERE has of late been an outcry amongst the orthodox of this country, about the importation of "a thousand and one" infidelities into England from Germany. We are told that it is of a more insidious, and therefore of a more dangerous character than the open and unblushing denial of religion by France. Christian weapons are used for the purpose of destroying Christianity. With a mystic jargon, and a continual preachment of spirit, it is doing more to sap and undermine all religious influences, than materialism, or any other *ism*, has ever been able to do. Our youth are warned against it, as a fearful poison, that will be death to their true natures here, and their souls hereafter. With a ceaseless warning our pulpits echo, and our evangelical literature takes up the notes in long and prolonged reverberations. Pantheism, Neology, Spiritualism, are some of the names given to this hydra-headed monster, that now goeth about in modern Europe, "seeking whom it may devour." We cannot dwell here upon the justness of these attacks, nor upon the mode in which the Christian churches do combat with their arch-enemy. To a great extent, it may be safely

said, that a man of straw has been created by honest, but timid minds, for the harmless purpose of destroying it again. In most cases, few have understood either the theories they have opposed, or their own object in the opposition. It has now become a party-cry to declaim against the philosophy of Germany, and its irreligion; and, like other party-cries, it is taken up by an "apostolic succession" of writers, who never care to investigate their truth or justice. In such a state of things it will answer a double purpose to endeavour, by a truthful inquiry, to ascertain the real state of things in respect to this important subject.

Germany, during its subjection to the Roman Catholic Church, presents the same phases which have characterized the countries whose course we have briefly traced. She has been, until of late, esteemed, and justly, as a pious nation; her people rather noted for simplicity, piety, and kind-heartedness, than otherwise. Her schools, at least a few of them, have been famous for the production of giants in literature; of men of the greatest extent and compass of erudition. She has been nothing if not critical. In her early history, she was distinguished for the production of men of dauntless courage and manly daring. Martin Luther was a type of Germany, a true Teuton. Yet was she of late development. Our own Wicliffe was a very distant precursor of Luther. The inventress of printing, she sent no books from her press that have won for her a lasting fame in the world, until long

after other nations were famous, and had reared sons to whose names mankind still bow with reverence and joy. There is a strange blank until Luther comes upon us with surprise and wonder. After his advent, for many long and weary years, her whole being was employed in religious controversy and theological disputes. Long and ponderous tomes of barbarous Latin has her press poured forth upon a suffering and afflicted world. The Reformation burst upon the world, as we have seen, when the Roman court had ceased to practise the religion it professed, and its hierarchy were steeped in licentiousness and profanity. This, and the eagerness with which that part of Germany who became Protestant received the new faith, and the zeal with which they sought to give it practical efficacy; and the new life which the threatened danger inspired in those who still adhered to the old Church; prevented the manifestation of an anti-Christian spirit which was but too prevalent in that age. We may detect every shade of belief, every variety of sectarianism in the life and literature of Germany at this period; but scepticism not at all. Men were too zealous, the one party to obtain, the other to defend, to ponder and doubt upon the questions about which they differed. It is not till a somewhat modern period that we find it making its appearance, and then in the modified form of rationalism.

Hermann Reimarus, who lived in the latter part of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries, may be considered the father of this

school. The peculiar characteristic of these theologians is, they receive Revelation, but only so much of it as is conformable to reason and experience. They have no room for faith. Miracles, and all that is supernatural in religion, are denied, or explained on rationalistic principles. They deny the historical truth of all that cannot thus be dealt with. Karl Friedrich Bahrdt may also be noticed here as belonging to this school. "His Bible in a Popular Tone" excited great attention at the time, and procured for its author the punishment of exile. Other names might be added, but it would prove unprofitable. A more general spread of the principles of scepticism now occurred in Germany. The following of French fashions and French thought, which has been so much and so justly deprecated by some of the German writers, now produced what might readily have been foretold,—a fashionable profession of irreligion and infidelity. Voltaire, under the nursing of his royal patron, Frederic, became famous in Germany, and everywhere some "little Voltaire," might be found, without much seeking, uttering his little jokes about religion; and passing his pooh, pooh! on faith. In many a now-forgotten volume and pamphlet was a wretchedly witty vein of blasphemy indulged; and in the universities were atheistic societies formed among the students*! This, however, was but of a temporary continuance; and the German mind under-

* A book written by Schummel, called "Der klein Voltaire," contains a clear account of the extent to which infidelity had reached in Germany at this period.

went an entire revolution in the nature of its theological and philosophical belief.

It is almost in our own times that Germany has reached her present high position in the literary world. Though what be called a thoughtful and, assuredly, a reading people, her greatest sons are, compared with other nations, modern. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are the epochs of her glory. The French Revolution, and its mighty promises, rung a strange peal in "Unser Vaterland," which aroused her from her long lethargy, and gave an activity to her mental growth, of which there have been but few equals in the history of the world. The names which crowd upon us, and the systems which have there had birth, are so numerous and perplexing, that the mind almost shrinks bewildered at the bare contemplation of the task. Happily, our subject limits us to a certain and confined sphere; we may, therefore, hope to escape much difficulty in our investigation, and reach our goal much more satisfactorily than we otherwise should be enabled to do.

The infidelity of Germany is peculiar. It seems almost a misuse of the word to apply it in this case. In its usual sense, a denial of religion, it is scarcely applicable to Germany at all. Her rationalists are religious; her philosophers are worshippers. We meet here a strange anomaly. Perhaps it may be explained by stating that nations, as well as individuals, have set up a standard of religious admeasurement, and all who do not conform thereto become immediately infidels, and are excommuni-

cated from religious communion as such. Germany in no wise yields to this decision. She is determined to examine, to judge, and to decide for herself. In this examination she may, and undoubtedly does, commit some strange vagaries. What then? Shall we say to the mind of a nation, "thus far shalt thou go, and no farther?" Will a newly-awakened spirit of inquiry be subjected to any rule, except that which it may work out for itself, as to the path it shall tread, and the track it must follow? Assuredly not. However far she may have wandered from the course which may appear right to us, who have to some extent passed through our slough of despond, gone through our valley and shadow of death, and are approaching the foot of the delectable mountain,—we watch her progress with the deepest interest; welcome every attempt, however apparently incongruous it may be; and wish her through all her spiritual doubts and troubles, with a hearty God-speed! Let us look a little more closely into this subject.

We noticed above that rationalism had made great progress in Germany. To the names already given may be added Schleiermacher and De Wette*, perhaps the most celebrated of this school. Their particular mode of receiving and interpreting Revelation we have already mentioned. The school is

* From a very long catalogue of names we may mention the following rationalistic authors of Germany:—Seulen, Herder, Schnerkenburgen, Michaelis, Bauer, Eichhorn, Vogel, Schmidt, Bretschneider, Paulus, and Mayerhoff. A hundred others might be added.

very numerous in Germany, and numbers amongst its professors some of her most talented and learned sons. To those who wish to pursue this subject further, we would recommend Sainte's History of Rationalism. It is, as all must be upon a question of such vital importance, a subject of great and especial interest. The principles advocated by these writers are rapidly spreading. The utilitarian spirit is peculiarly adapted for their reception. France and England and America number many advocates of this system, and these not the least gifted, powerful, and influential of their writers and teachers. It would well become every one, therefore, to examine for himself, in a more extended way than this rapid review will admit of. Whatever our opinion may be of the doctrines advocated, we shall be amply repaid by the amount of knowledge gained by the investigation, and the new power thereby acquired for the defence of what may appear to us more conformable to the true spirit of religion and the real interests of mankind.

Before we turn to examine the strictly philosophical theories, we must mention a school almost peculiar to Germany. At the commencement of the present century (1837) appeared a learned and critical work by David Frederick Strauss (who was himself a follower of Eichhorn), entitled "Leben Jesu." The great object of this work was to prove that all accounts of miracles, and supernatural events recorded in the Scriptures, are mythical and legendary. He maintains that the same spirit of

criticism, exegetical and otherwise, is to be employed in discussing the historic validity of the New Testament, as we should in any other book. The manner in which Niebuhr treated the history of Rome is the model of his examination. To this question he has brought an amount of erudition truly astonishing, especially when we consider the youth of the author, a calm philosophic spirit, a clear judgment, great critical acumen, and an undaunted resolution. After drawing a distinction between a *truth* and a *fact*, he argues that the latter is not essential for the existence of the former; that is to say, that while we question a recorded fact as to the truth of its occurrence or not, we may firmly believe in the underlying truth which generated the record. Thus he holds the truth of the divine mission of Christ and his teachings holy and sacred. At the same time he invalidates the narratives of the four Evangelists, and asserts that they are rather personifications of what they expected of a Messiah than what Christ really was. Nay, the very personal existence of Jesus of Nazareth becomes a question of doubt; nor do we see how any one holding the full theory of Strauss can believe in Him at all. He becomes a pure idea—a mere symbol. The glorious personality of the faith evaporates into thin air. Christ becomes a shadow. We lose the man, and grasp in his stead an ideal figment. Quinet's remarks upon this subject are so pertinent to the question before us, that we gladly quote the whole paragraph.

"A learned German, Dr. Strauss, a man of unquestionable merit, has set forth, upon the mission of Jesus Christ, a system calculated to astound all Europe. According to this idea, Jesus would be constantly occupied with copying his life after the prophecies of the Old Testament; thus, each of his actions would be commanded by a text, and he would, as it were, be only repeating the past. This is as much as to efface from the world the life and person of Jesus Christ, and to leave in its place only a system of erudition. When people saw that figure in danger of disappearing from history, there was, in our days, a shudder, an extraordinary fermentation in the land; there was an immense controversy, in which it was clearly perceptible that *our clergy had lost the pre-eminence*, since they could not find a word to say upon a question which was agitating all the north. They went on attacking Voltaire, whilst the very body of Jesus Christ was being carried off in the night season, without their perceiving it. In Germany, the most impatient soon found that the criticism of Dr. Strauss had not gone far enough; they hastened to destroy the *image* of Christ that he had allowed to remain on the Cross, and everything disappeared in a void a hundred times more empty than that of the Baron of Holbach, or of Helvetius. Others, on the contrary—the majority—horror-struck, shut their book: they ceased to think; in the fear of not being sufficiently Christians, they turned gnostics and visionaries. Wounded by their own weapons, they

returned to faith, through fear. Such is, in our time, the state of the controversy."*

This will explain what is meant by the accusation often made against some of the German theologians by our own preachers, viz., that they profess Christianity, but deny Christ. From such a position we see no way but that which has already been taken by some of Strauss's followers,—a complete denial of Christianity as a divine revelation, and a falling back upon the rationalistic scheme of absolute religion; that is, a simple deism.

The investigation of the philosophical systems which, in Germany, professed to supplement, or to ignore the Gospel, will require a somewhat more extended inquiry.

The idealism of Descartes, the pantheism of Spinoza, the theory of monads, and pre-established harmony of Leibnitz, found many followers and teachers in Germany. The pantheism of Spinoza, tending as it does to direct atheism, is too material to suit the ideal tendencies of her philosophy, and has produced but little, and that a temporary effect. The idealism of Descartes is more congenial to the nature of the Teutonic mind, and has, therefore, exercised a lasting influence over their speculations. The system of Locke from the first found a decided opponent in Leibnitz. The theory, "that there is nothing in the understanding but what has first passed through the senses," was met by the answer,

* Quinet's Christianity, Lesson iii. p. 25.—Cocks's Translation.

that "there is the understanding itself." With the exception of Spinoza, neither of the philosophers above-mentioned merit a place in this history. They were not opposers of religion; both of them endeavoured to prove that their systems were congenial with Christianity and revelation. They have been mentioned simply as the fathers of a philosophy, which has in late years been carried to such extremes as to be totally inconsistent with our religious belief, and to render a Revelation unnecessary and altogether impertinent.

The first name that we mention here will, of course, be Kant. He commenced his philosophical career with the extreme Pyrrhonism of David Hume. This afterwards underwent a modification; and, though he so far adhered to his original denial of the possibility of man's arriving at positive truth, as to assert the impossibility of either *à priori* or *à posteriori* demonstrations of the existence of a God, he deemed the existence of God necessary, to preserve the complete harmony of the universal scheme, and the only answer to a want of the heart. It would be out of place here to attempt an analysis of the arguments employed to prove these propositions; we have but to point out the results to which he arrived, to show that we are warranted in giving their author a place in a work of this kind. The greatest successors of Kant are Fichte and Oken. The first has applied the system of idealism in mental philosophy to the extreme point to which it is capable of being extended.

He has carried his ideas of the importance of his system so far, as to assert that the philosophy of Locke is the worst and most injurious with which a nation could be afflicted*. We cannot pause here to defend our illustrious countryman; but we may say that the strictures of the German, though somewhat justified by the low utilitarianism which the professed disciples of the sensationalism of Locke have advocated in our own day, is too indiscriminate, too sweeping, and unjust. It may be much doubted whether the *seeming* substantiality of the one is not a necessary corrective of the *seeming* airiness of the other. The extreme views of either appear to us entirely inconsistent with the *personality* of God;—the one making matter eternal, the other making the ruling power a mere idea, a shadow, a nonentity. Oken has employed the system of Kant in relation to the physical world and its phenomena. Thus into all the parts of creation has this idealism been carried; and the disciples of the school are now committing those strange vagaries, which the desire to say something new and startling on a subject almost exhausted necessitates†.

* See Fichte's Characteristics of the Present Age.

† "With regard to the effects produced by the philosophy of Kant, it may be remarked that they were both salutary and injurious. It prostrated the pride of those who pretended to be able to demonstrate everything, and it aroused the mind from the drowsiness which had been produced by the popular philosophy. Its evil effects were, that a cold frigid spirit was thrown over its advocates, who employed themselves about dry morality and barren intellect,

The material pantheism of Spinoza has founded its direct antipodes in Germany, by the spiritual pantheisms of Schelling and Hegel. Schelling has produced a system most poetically beautiful. We are borne away by its superior brightness, its warmth, and attractiveness. It is, while spiritual, more humane than the cold, argumentative idealism of Kant's Pure Reason. He reaches the heart through the heart. There is room for enthusiasm, fire, and vital action. The faculties of man are all given room enough for action; it harmonizes much with his being. Yet, practically, it ignores Revelation, and almost supersedes the simple beauty of Christianity by an intricate spiritual philosophy. Hegel was at the first a warm and ardent disciple of Schelling. He afterwards departed from his master's teachings, and erected a system of philosophy which proposed to unite the systems of Kant, Fichte, and Schelling. This is not the place to dwell either upon the minute or important differences between these theories. Suffice it that they are mere theories and speculation; and if their authors were believers in positive religion, the

rejecting all deep feeling as fanaticism; even prayer itself was rejected. Hence all the sciences to which this philosophy extended its influence lost their vitality, and assumed a pedantic, scholastic, schoolmaster-like aspect. This was especially the case with theology and history. They were only estimated so far as they solved the problem of the Kantist morals; what was individual and characteristic was not regarded. Christ himself was estimated only for having sought a system of morals analogous to those of Kant."—Tholuck's History of Theology in the Eighteenth Century.

effect of their teachings has been to increase doubt, scepticism, and a pantheism which, by denying the personality of God, is virtually atheism. Hence our reason for mentioning them here. There are German writers more directly infidel, such as Mauvillon and Holbart, but their influence has been little, and their disciples few. These we have intentionally and advisedly omitted; while we have given names that are not usually classed in the category of unbelievers, from the tendency and effect of their systems to render man entirely independent of a revealed religion, and to generate what has been, not inaptly, termed a "philosophical infidelity" in regard to Christianity. We are quite conscious of the incompleteness of our account in respect to Germany. But those who know the peculiar position of the theology and philosophy of this prolific nation, will at once acknowledge the difficulty of unravelling the various and conflicting theories which are in existence. This very confusion is a proof how very far they have wandered from the simple basis of Christian verity. Let it not be supposed that we say one word deprecatory of philosophy on this account. We merely state a fact. We believe it has a mighty mission to perform; that it must go through various phases; that it must pass through "new scenes and changes of untried being," before anything like a complete and harmonic relationship can be realized between philosophy and faith. That Germany is doing much to bring about this "consummation so devoutly to be

wished," is to us clear. We love her spiritual strugglings to arrive at truth. Her soul-throes betoken vitality which, by exercise and experience, will become healthy, vigorous, and constructive. Her daring grapplings with infinity reveal a strong and a soaring mind. That extravagances are committed; that wild vagaries sometimes characterize her flights; that vain speculations and idle puerilities are mingled with her endeavours;—all this was to be expected. And never let us forget that our own literature and philosophy have done much to generate this state of things. The impulse given to the German mind by the works of Shakspeare is now fully developing itself, and reacting upon the literature and thinking of the world. To produce this change the works of Lessing powerfully contributed. Chronologically we should have mentioned him before; but his place is, perhaps, more appropriately here. We might designate him as a modern worshipper of the Grecian mythology. His love for her literature, her philosophy, and her customs, made him bow down before the shrine of Jupiter, and wreath a laurel for the brows of Apollo. He influenced the criticism and taste of his country more than her philosophy. In this respect his works were beneficial and salutary. His peculiar idiosyncrasies died with him. Nor is there much fear of their resurrection—*requiescant in pace!*

With this name we close our very brief notice of religious scepticism in Germany. It is our most earnest hope that we have misrepresented nothing. We have

written what appeared simply the truth, after much examination and thought. If there be any erroneous conclusions drawn, or wrong inferences deduced, they have resulted from the difficulty of unravelling some of the abstruse philosophical writings of her authors, and not from partiality or prejudice. There is no literature from which we have derived more satisfaction, profit, and delight, than the German. We would not repay our indebtedness by ingratitude; but truth necessitates us to say, that we believe more good would have been done to the world, if the same amount of genius, talent, learning, and industry had been employed in labouring to give practical efficacy to the pure morality of Christ than has been done by the building up of so many systems of philosophy, each in its turn triumphing and being conquered, and all destined in time to be swallowed up by the highest of all philosophies,—the philosophy, practical and hard-working, of the Christian verity.

CHAPTER V.

ENGLAND.

SPEAKING of England, Morell has said, "For absolute scepticism we have too *little* philosophy, for the scepticism of ignorance we have too *much* religion." Perhaps the absence of these two elements of scepticism will account for the comparatively little influence it has ever had amongst us. We willingly confess that we are open to the charge so often urged against us by our far-going continental neighbours, of timidity and weak-mindedness. If "timidity" means, as it often does, the "fear of God," then we receive it as a glory, not a shame. If "weakness" means a powerlessness of intellect to grapple with such questions, we quietly point to the mighty minds our country has produced in all the departments of mental culture, and "pass on our way rejoicing." We are well content to preserve our religious character, even at the loss of some philosophy; and if need be, to occupy a less commanding position in respect to the place of our philosophical superiority, if by that means we possess the more useful and enviable wealth of a pious, happy, and contented people.

The history of England has, like the history of every other country, been moulded by the peculiar

characteristics of the people. These early displayed themselves in a love of independence and freedom. Hence she was among the first, if not the first, to question the authority of the Pope. The preachings of Wicliffe, and the singing of Chaucer, had long prepared the way for Luther. Lollardism was powerful, by its number of votaries, long before the Reformation. The Roman Church was a bending reed long ere we repudiated her claims to exercise spiritual domination over our island. The earnestness and practical nature of the English people early manifested itself, and produced notable results, of which the present generation reap the benefits, and enjoy the advantages. The philosophy of Bacon is in every respect in accordance with the national mind. A desire to see, to feel, and to grasp, distinguish us. Something tangible, practicable, are words for ever on our lips. This trait has its good, as well as its bad side. It preserves us from receiving, to any influencing extent, the wild theories and speculations which, in other countries, have produced such strange, and, for the time, such disastrous results. The cry for "facts" has its reward as well as its punishment. It may have led us to the adoption of a material philosophy, which has been injurious to our spiritual progress, and prevented a fuller development of the deep vitality of the Christian faith, which "walks by faith and not by sight." It doubtless has produced "materialism—the grand idolatry, as we may rightly call it, by which, in all times, the true worship of the Invisible has been polluted and with-

stood."* Yet it has preserved us, on the other hand, from the unsubstantial pantheism of Germany, and prevented the non-existence-of-matter theory of Berkeley being carried to that extravagance of which other lands have proved it possible. We certainly regret the extreme materialism of England, and would fain see its utilitarian spirit more ennobled, elevated, and Christianized; but we can see that this so much abused system has its advantages, as well as its disadvantages,—its light, as well as its darkness.

Lord Herbert is the first name which we place on our list of sceptical writers. His treatise "*De Veritate*" was published in 1624, at a time when England was not very rich in speculative works. This, though not from its own intrinsic value worthy of much study, is an object of respect as a sign of the tendency of the age, and as a work of one of its most earnest men. Its scepticism has been questioned; but there is little doubt now as to the nature of the book.

The giant of the seventeenth century was undoubtedly Hobbes. He was a disciple of Bacon; a lover of the inductive method, and, perhaps, the head of the utilitarian school in England, both in respect to power and genius. His works have been analyzed and confuted by almost every writer on morals and religion, since their appearance. His system is, without doubt, the lowest that has ever

* Carlyle.

been propounded. Moral law, in the heart of man, by which he can distinguish good from evil, there is none. Things are good only so far as they are useful ; that is, conducive to happiness and well-being. So far as they prevent the realization of these states, they are evil. There is no abstract and immutable good. The laws of the king, prince, or ruling power, are absolute ; a subject must obey them, however revolting to the law of God. As a citizen, man has nothing to do with higher law than the statute book contains. If, with him, it be God *versus* the king, the king is ruler, and God must succumb. Such practical atheism was worthy the age in which it was propounded, and the court in which it found patronisers and professors. In no age has England presented such a sad condition as this. Prostitutes were her rulers ; atheists were her king's councillors ; and her philosopher was instrumental in giving stability to such rottenness and corruption. With a king like Charles II., and statesmen like Rochester and Buckingham, and a philosopher like Hobbes, we need not be surprised at the wretched plight of our poor country during the rule of such "powers that were." It is saying much for the religion of our people, when we call to mind, that Hobbes holds a similar celebrity amongst us for his morals as Machiavel has held in modern Europe for his politics.

The spirit of Puritanism, which so much permeated the mind of England, prevented the growth of infidelity. It is true that the severe regimen of

the Commonwealth and Protectorate caused the reaction of the Restoration. But, even during this reign of licentiousness, there was among the body a strong leaven of the old feeling producing good results. The Puritanic party, though apparently subdued, were never inactive; nor was it the least potent of their boasts, that the greatest epic poet the world has ever had was of their party. A Puritan of the noblest kind, John Milton has shed a glory round them, which, with the notable work they did, will ever preserve for them a high place in the memory of their country. To them we owe the character of our nonconformists of the succeeding reign, and the ceaseless efforts being made to educate and Christianize our people. They did a great and noble work; and we may, indeed, be proud of their names, notwithstanding the amount of what was censurable in their conduct, and evil in their influence. The comparison between the piety, morality, and religion of England under their rule, though in many places hypocrisy might powerfully intrude, with the irreligion, licentiousness, and utter want of veneration for things holy and sacred of the succeeding era, is all in their favour. A rigid and stern Cromwell was better than an impotent and lascivious Charles; a council of Puritanic officers was to be preferred to a cabal of atheists and apostates; the quiet domestic propriety of the Protector's household to a court whose presiding deities were Mrs. Palmers and Nell Gwynnes. The comparison tends every way to establish the truth, that religion,

though a little over sanctimonious and pretending, is more beneficial to a people than immorality, impiety, and scoffing contempt.

It would not, perhaps, be right to pass over the name of Shaftesbury. Some may doubt the justness of naming him amongst a class of writers opposed to religious or positive truth. Yet, those who carefully read his witty, clever, and lucidly-written "Characteristics" cannot fail to arrive at the conclusion of their author's scepticism. Warburton has clearly shown their tendency; and, though severe in his analysis of their philosophy, he has not neglected to do justice to the talents, shrewdness, and style of their gifted author.

But whatever doubts may exist respecting Shaftesbury's claim to a place here, there can be none to the names of Bolingbroke and the two monarchs of scepticism of the eighteenth century—Gibbon and Hume. The career of the first was somewhat varied and curious. From Protestantism to Catholicism, back from Catholicism to Protestantism, and thence to unbelief; such was the course through which he passed. In elaborately-constructed sentences, which, to appearance, increased the weight and solemnity of his charge, he did not so much directly attack the bulwarks as seek to undermine the basis of Christianity. Byron has well said of him,—

. "Deep and slow, exhausting thought,
And hiving wisdom with each studious year,
In meditation dwelt, with learning wrought,

And shaped his weapon with an edge severe,
Sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer."*

Assuming a strict impartiality, yet everywhere allowing the spirit of a determined antagonist to guide his judgment and his pen, the faith has had but few more insidious and powerful enemies than Gibbon; nor can its opposers name one of whom they have more reason to be proud.

The system of Hume applies to all the departments of knowledge. It is extreme Pyrrhonism. Philosophy and religion alike suffer from its attacks. With him the doubting interrogative of Montaigne, "*Que sçais-je?*" becomes a settled question, and the answer is, "I know nothing." His celebrated "Essays" carry Locke's theory of experience into all departments; see especially those entitled "Sceptical Doubts concerning the Operations of the Understanding;" and "Of Miracles." His system is one of entire negation; and he may be placed at the head of the sceptical school in England.

The works of Hume gave birth to many more upon the same subject, and in opposition thereto. The reasoning of Hutchinson upon the nature of vice and virtue, and his denial of any immutable law upon which they were founded, asserting, and, as his followers deemed, proving that they are "entirely relative to the sentiment or mental taste of each particular being,"* was completely adopted by Hume,

* Byron, Childs Harold, canto iii. stanza 107.

† Hume, Note to Essay i.

and those who followed in his path. These met with vigorous opposition from those who maintained the existence of an immutable law, and looked upon virtue as something higher than the notions which man might entertain of their utility and fitness to the order of things. With these we have nothing to do. The teachings of Hume produced their natural consequence. Minds less philosophical than even his, accepted his views and attacked religion with a virulence at which the calm placid temperament of the Scotch metaphysician would have shrunk aghast. With less scrupulousness, because with less investigation, they assailed all religious belief, and what they wanted in reason made up for in noise and venom. At the head of this class may be placed the otherwise justly celebrated Thomas Paine. The effects of his teachings were necessarily more general than the subtle and refined speculations of philosophic doubters could be. They reached the people. Combining, with vigour of language and strength of argument, virulence of abuse, appeal to prejudice and passion, with a vulgar straight-forwardness which makes great impression upon those who have quick eyes to detect discrepancies, and little leisure and less learning to investigate their cause—there cannot be a doubt but that the “Age of Reason” has made more infidels in England than any other single book. Paine was of the people, entered into their feelings, knew their prejudices, wrote for them, and, to a great extent, achieved his object. His followers have

equalled him in the worst part of his character. Most of them have been merely abusers of a religion whose beauties their excited and misdirected feelings were unable to appreciate. They have committed the blunder which is only pardonable in the most ignorant, of confounding a system with its teachers; of a faith with its professors. Richard Carlisle long occupied the unenviable position of being leader in this opposition. That he was honest and sincere, we have no reason to question. But honesty and sincerity are no guarantees of a man's fitness for the office he undertakes, and are no protection for having abused himself and misled others. He is in his grave, and but that his influence survives him, we should not, perhaps, have spoken so harshly of his life. We need but mention the name of the highly-gifted and unfortunate Shelley.

Our own age has been distinguished by the propounding of a theory which has more disciples and apostles than any other at the present day. Its promulgator, Robert Owen, is a man of a benevolent disposition, an amiable character, and an actively philanthropic nature. With a system of social regeneration he has united philosophical and metaphysical dogmas which, in our opinion, would utterly destroy all attempts to realize the reforms he has in view. By abnegating religion, he has taken away the only basis upon which a superstructure of social amelioration could be erected. It is of no use to blind ourselves to the nature of his teachings, nor to endeavour to explain them away.

They are entirely opposed to religion. Accept them, and man's nature is completely denied: God is a nonentity: some strange power of universal law becomes the sole deity: man has nothing to worship; is merely a thing of to-day: immortality, a figment; faith, in as far as it relates to a higher life than the present, a dream. As a philosophical system, we entertain no respect for it whatever. His "five fundamentals" are, in our estimation, contradictory, unsatisfactory, and illogical in the extreme. We think, with Morell, that there has never been so weak and narrow a basis upon which to build a system, submitted to the world.

Round this veteran of unbelief has congregated a band of earnest, zealous, and devoted disciples. Their progress has been considerable, but is at present rather on the decline. Were our object to write a simple catalogue, there are many names to enumerate. But this, for many reasons, we refrain from doing. To treat of living writers is a subject delicate in the extreme; and as this is unnecessary for the attainment of our purpose, we refrain from doing so. If it were needed, and likely to effect any useful purpose, we should not shrink from our duty, however unpleasant. This is not the case; we therefore leave them unnoticed, contenting ourselves with naming the founder and his school.

We have concluded our short historical survey. The object proposed has been, perhaps imperfectly, completed. We had no desire to enumerate every author who has written in favour of infidelity, but

rather to indicate the phases through which the four great European nations have passed. We have omitted some names of cotemporary importance, simply because they added nothing new to the question they discussed, or had no permanent influence upon the literature and opinion of their country; others, because they were mere deniers of religion without any other reason than a depraved intellect, a vicious life, and repugnance to any control whatever. Had we enumerated all who have appeared in the prolific lands of modern France and Germany, we should have had a well-filled list, and nothing more. For this we had no desire, nor did the plan of the present work require it. It is an intentional omission, and one for which the reader may well be grateful. Most of them are more or less known to us; but no satisfaction or improvement could have resulted from raking them up from their native obscurity, and directing attention to names which otherwise would have been quietly buried and speedily forgotten. We trust enough has been done to give the reader something like a comprehensive view of this strange phenomenon in the history of man. We shall conclude this part of our labours with a chapter on the present condition of the religious world.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE PRESENT CONDITION OF THE RELIGIOUS WORLD.

ACCORDING to the preachers of the religion of Christ, the mass of the people are either entirely indifferent, or altogether opposed to their labours. This may be received as the exact truth of the matter, coming as it does from the parties most interested in the assertion of an opposite condition in the state of things. There is, be the cause what it may, a total alienation between the British churches and the British people. The same may be said of the other European countries already noticed. In France, in Germany, in Italy, and in England, the cry is, the Church is not the church of the people. It is everywhere asserted that the two thousand years employed in striving to give practical effect to the doctrines of Christianity, have ended in producing a people unimproved, unbenefited, uninfluenced, either politically, socially, morally, or religiously;—that at this present time the great majority of the people under professed Christian rule are in a state of ignorance, debasement, and impiety approaching to heathen barbarism. That, either through an improper manifestation of its effects on the part of its teachers, or

something radically wrong in the system itself, which we cannot for a moment admit, the Christian religion has failed entirely in producing what a God-inspired religion should produce, a happy, intelligent, honest, and pious community. Whatever may be the cause, the fact is indubitable. The people are not of the Church. I use the word not in a technical sense, as relating to mere establishments, but broadly, in relation to Christ. The founder of the faith has ceased to be the hope of mankind. If the people need reform, they go anywhere rather than to the preachers of to-day. Politics is a more potent power, has more hold upon their hearts, claims and obtains more of their time, boasts, more truly boasts, of possessing more of their hope, their trust, their faith, than does religion. This is not an isolated thing; it is the general position of the people at the present day. The most active, earnest, laborious, and thoughtful part of the masses, as they are somewhat irreverently called, are out of connection with any religious community. The greatest works of the world are done by men opposed to it. The charities of life are performed by other hands than religious. The most philanthropic men of the age are not only laymen, but men who desire to be known as not connected with any religious denomination. The churches are almost powerless over the people. They possess not their sympathies. Their influence extends not beyond the comparatively few, who from Sunday to Sunday assemble in their respective buildings, and listen to

the prosy discourses against abstract sin therein delivered. The popular heart is untouched. Political cries are more potent to arouse them than the voice of the preacher. Nay, if he calls in the street, the people walk on the other side and smile. Doubt of their sincerity is the common expression of the people in relation to the "cloth." A thousand street proverbs might be gathered in illustration of this. They are well known to all, and need not to be repeated. It is sufficient for our purpose that none are more sensible of the fact than the religious themselves. They know the fact, and while they are quarrelling about the cause, the breach is every day growing wider.

If, for the sake of experiment, a man were to go the round of our places of worship, as they are called, whether properly or not, in the true interpretation of that awful word, and note by whom they are visited, what a strange question must arise in his mind. Where are the people? would he exclaim with surprise. The tone of gentility and outward respectability which mark their visitors sufficiently indicate the kind of religion taught within. Depend upon it nothing is taught there that can offend the most fastidious ears of respectability. One need not enter to know the diluted Christianity which is poured upon the ears of the well-to-do listeners. Watch the air of placid contentedness with which they enter, and the still more easily recognised air of contentedness with which they return home to their well-spread tables, their ease, comforts, and luxuries.

But in the mean time where are the people? Where the outcasts, the Pariahs, the publicans, and sinners, whom Jesus came "to *seek* and to save?" Anywhere rather than in a church. Some seeking the fresh air in a country ramble, after a week of unmitigated toil in close and ill-ventilated workshops. May God give them joy! Others seeking to wile away their weekly dole of leisure in bed; not so much from delight in the luxury, as from complete physical exhaustion. Some renewing their acquaintance with the morning draught, to freshen them up, after the exhilaration of the Saturday night's debauch has given place to the lassitude and wretchedness of returning consciousness. In such and worse condition, are thousands of our people, everywhere crying unto God "see how the Church performs its mission for the children of men." Everywhere amongst them is a growing contempt for the ministers of religion. The class who used to be honoured and esteemed are now the least respected. If they on some particular occasion rouse from their accustomed lethargy, and actively labour to effect some amelioration in the condition of the people, the unexpected, and we may truly say the unwonted, attempt is received with contempt and derision; their motives are questioned; some insidious and underhand dealing is looked for; everything except a pure wish to benefit the people is attributed to them; reasons for their conduct are sought anywhere but in the programme issued by themselves; ulterior designs, which have for their

object the consolidation or increase of their own power, are declared the moving springs of their actions. The sheep will not receive the shepherd; the flock forsake the pastor. No cry is so impotent to raise the enthusiasm of the people as the "Church in danger." The answer is, "let those who profit by it see to its condition and defend it. We, who are only injured by its existence, care not if it fall. Let it go." Any amount of evidence might be adduced in support of our assertions. The Church is not of the people; the people are not of the Church.

But it may be said in reply, that the neglect of the churches by the people proves nothing of the absence of religious feeling amongst them. This might be so, but it is not. True religion is not only not the vitalizing power of our people, but it is no longer the distinguishing characteristic of our churches. Church principles, that is, honesty in trading, purity of being, holiness of living, and strict truthfulness in all our relations with our fellow-man, are absent from amongst us. Our trade, our commerce, our social life, our politics, are not conducted religiously. There may be, and doubtless are, exceptions; but we are speaking now of the general condition. Our trade has become trickery, a system in which each one's object is to get the weak side of his brother. Our social life is one awful mass of corruption. In no part of it is it holy and pure. Our poor are extremely poor, and therefore ignorant, sinful, and dangerous. Our middle classes

are apathetic and careless; our rich indifferent and luxurious. Nowhere is the spirit of Christ potent amongst us. Every one thinks of his own things, and not of the things of his brother. In our politics the support of party is the grand object sought after, and not the ruling of the nation by just and holy laws. An aristocracy has to be kept. Useless offices and sinecures must be reserved, no matter how useless, how burdensome, that Lord So-and-so's younger sons may be provided with situations by which the dignity of their station may be preserved, and the honour and glory of the kingdom maintained. What matter though the wail of an over-laboured, over-taxed, and uneducated people rise to the throne of God against such proceedings? While politics means party triumph, and not the temporal salvation of a nation, these iniquities will be of constant occurrence. But worse than all, our religion is not Christian. A huge practical infidelity lords it in our temples, and presides at our altars. The Church, the congregation, the sect; not man, is the cry. In no denomination could we apply the rule of Christ and find it conformable thereto. The Christianity of the market-place has devoured the Christianity of Christ. Our professors are truly so. God's house has again become a scene of money-changers. Its glory has departed. God has not forsaken us, but we have forsaken Him. Daily are souls going down to death who never heard His name, except to blaspheme; and our preachers for the most part content themselves with complaining

Sunday after Sunday of the spread of infidelity ; of the growth of unbelief ; of the enemies of religion. They should look nearer home. The greatest infidelity would be found in the Church. The worst unbelief presides every week at the altar. God's chiefest foes are among those who announce themselves as his soldiers.

These are strong charges to make. We should have shrunk from the task if they had been founded upon our own observation alone. They are not. Every church can present at least one of its most active members who has in stronger and more forcible language given utterance to the same. At every religious meeting the like complaints are made. Exeter Hall re-echoes every May with the thunders of denouncing preachers against the Pope, the German, and the Infidel, for having robbed them of their influence and power. Their own organs weekly, daily, pour forth denunciations against some favourite foe, created by their own neglect of the duties of their religion. The most earnest and hopeful amongst them clearly see the condition to which we are come, and openly charge the religious with their neglect of duty. Whatever may be the cause, the fact is certain. The life of England is not religious. Christianity is not the law of our Church, our State, our society. Mammon is our god, and at his shrine we lay down honesty, purity, holiness, and soul. The desire to be rich has eaten up the desire to have a soul pure, spotless, and adorned for its dwelling-place in heaven. Where

this can be said to be the great actuating cause of our labours, the deepest wish of our heart, the constant theme of our endeavours, the one great end for which we strive, and toil, and sweat, then we may be sure that Christianity has no vital hold on our life, — no high control over our conduct. Such is the one great characteristic of the age. Those who are too poor to take any active part in the race content themselves with laughing at those who fall, and envying those who succeed.

Over against this statement we would set, what we believe to be truly the case, a large amount of really Christian life, active, energetic, and making continual warfare upon the evils we have thus faintly delineated. Were it not so, we should despair of any permanent amelioration being effected amongst us. Our only hope is in Christianity. We believe in its ultimate triumph. The way to attain that triumph is not to close our eyes to the dangers by which we are surrounded. In noticing these dangers it is but just that we should allude to the noble hearts who are labouring, late and early, with all their strength and power, to remove them. God never yet left himself without a witness in the earth. The true and faithful ministers who are even now to be found wherever there is sin, and sorrow, and suffering, are the only apostolical succession on the earth; the genuine descendants of the followers of the Lord, "who counted not their lives dear" so that they might spend them in his service. These still proclaim

the vital power of the faith. These still reveal the depth of that love which can overcome all things to win but a soul to God. Alas! they are too few to regenerate the world, and only serve to show more palpably the Cimmerian gloom which everywhere surrounds us. Their little light but makes us feel the awful reality of Milton's words, and renders "darkness visible." Yet to them we bow in reverence, and exclaim, "here are the true witnesses of God in this generation."

In endeavouring truly to estimate the relation of religion to the people, we must not overlook the large number of thoughtful, industrious, and intelligent men amongst the working classes, who remain aloof from outward conformity to any existing church. Far be it from us to say that the larger part are irreligious. We believe otherwise. They are not of the Church, because the Church is false to their ideal of a religious community. Now what can be said of a church when the most thoughtful, earnest, and we may say pious, of the people refuse allegiance to its control and practically repudiate its authority? Persons who know most of the habits and manners of the working classes will readily bear me out, that those amongst them who are ceaselessly labouring for the improvement of their order, never for a moment think of applying to the teachers of religion to assist them in effecting their object,—nay, would oppose their assistance being received if tendered: would do this on principle; not from captious opposition to the clerical order; not from anti-religious feelings; but simply

from the fact, that their names would only damage the cause most at heart ; would retard rather than accelerate their labours ; would prevent their final success, rather than speed the coming day. Why is this ? If you desire to acquire the co-operation of the higher and middle classes, you have only to get the names of a long list of clergymen, and you succeed. If, on the other hand, you desire to gain the sympathies of the working classes, you have only to do the same, and you ruin the cause you undertake to accomplish by such means. Such is the general state of things amongst us at the present day. The great mass of the people, ignorant or educated, reckless or thoughtful, look upon the Church as hostile to their true interests, as inimical to their progress. They have no confidence in her ministers ; distrust every scheme that emanates from her councils ; refuse to be numbered amongst her people ; lead a life independent of her control ; and smile complacently at her fulminations. They have no love, no respect, no esteem, for her counsels, no veneration for her statutes. An alienated people proclaims a negligent Church ; an hostile people declares an opposing Church. Such is the condition of the English people in relation to the spiritual powers of their kingdom. Nowhere is there peace and harmony, but war and discord between them. Church authority is a figment of ecclesiastical history—religious governance a thing of the by-gone.

What we have said of England will apply with still greater force to the other European nations.

The state of France is especially to the point. Her people are not only antagonist to the Church, but are even opposed to Christianity. They declare it to be effete and worn out. They are looking for a new dispensation which shall bring for them that temporal salvation which Christianity has yet not done. Religion itself has lost all attraction, all influence for them. They are practically without God in the world. In his stead is set up some strange idol of political or social reform, which is the object of their worship and veneration, perhaps in its central truth more religious than its opposers deem. We cannot pause to inquire that now; sufficient for us that the propounders and supporters of these schemes for man's redemption abnegate religion, and seek to make the world independent of a God; working its wondrous mission under the guidance of some ill-defined laws which have been christened laws of nature, to save us from the impropriety of saying laws of God. The French people are, perhaps, more than any others alienated from the Church. The peculiar baseness of their rulers; the total want of a tone of high morality amongst their great men, no matter of what party in politics; the prevalence of atheism amongst their scientific men and philosophers; the impure lives of their priests; all have conspired to make the gulf more wide; the hatred more intense. The people of France have found their priesthood hostile to everything by which their condition could be ameliorated. The strongest

supporters of every abuse have been found in the ecclesiastical order. The upholders of tyranny in its vilest forms have been the ministers of religion. Is the question the education of the people, the priests oppose it. Is it political enfranchisement, again the priests oppose. Is it the assertion of the dignity and rights of labour, still the opposers are the priests. Need we wonder that France is not religious? Need we wonder that the French people are engaged in continual warfare with the teachers of the faith?

The present state of Germany is very peculiar. Every opinion in her free states, and every shade of opinion, is striving for the mastery. With perhaps less of direct irreligion than England or France, her whole life is "shaken from its propriety" by the intense love for speculation which now distinguishes her history. This clearly proves an unsettledness of belief; a continued oscillation of mind. In her Church, and out of her Church, the most extreme latitudinarianism prevails. Believers in Revelation are at war with its opposers. Rationalists deride the theory of plenary inspiration; and disbelievers in Revelation deride the allowance of rationalists. Straussites hold up their ideal mythicism, and mourn over the blindness and credulity of those who trust in the historical validity of the record. Such is the state of one part of modern Germany. The Catholic part boasts an uniformity; but it is an uniformity of ignorance, superstition, and outward observance; not the beautiful uniformity of

a vital and elevating Christianity. The country of the Reformation demands a new reformation, and nowhere is the Church and people one. New Luthers are abroad, and other popes than those of Rome are being dragged from the chair of infallibility.

If we turn to Rome a more marked, because a more unexpected, disunion between the Church and the people exists. The Pope is no longer the god of the people's idolatry. With indignation and contempt have they repudiated their priestly rulers. The dominance of cardinals they have declared intolerable. French bayonets and Austrian cunning, backed by the latter's lord and master, the despotic Russian, may uphold it for a time; but this upholding will but still more widen the breach, and extend what was but at first an intolerance of spiritual rule in temporal affairs to an intolerance of religion itself. Is it not a fearful thing when the head of the Church, the declared, and for his own country the acknowledged, Universal Father of the Faithful, is supported by the most despotic powers on the earth; is seated on his throne by brute force, against the will of the people he professes to rule and guide? A temporal prince who is not throned in the hearts of the people holds but a weak and precarious rule. But what shall we say of a power professing to derive his credentials from God, received as the appointed vicegerent of the Prince of Peace, evoking the kings of this world to chastise his rebellious subjects, and force

upon them a government they hate, despise, and condemn? Yet such is the present state of Rome. One of the noblest men the late revolutionary movement of nations produced has said, "You wish to rebuild a throne, and give new lustre to the Popery; I will tell you in what you have succeeded. You have raised the *religious* question, and given the finishing blow to a falling institution. You aimed at saving the Sovereign, and you have killed the Pope; destroying the moral *prestige* which surrounded him, by the aid of your arms; degrading, in the eyes of Italy, him who is the sole arbiter of the religious question, by foreign support, and separating him from the people by a torrent of blood. In that blood the Popery was stifled. The only means of saving it, the only means of withdrawing it from the foreign influence which is its ruin, was to snatch it from the sphere of political influences to the more pure and independent one of the soul. You have now closed for ever the last road to safety. The Popery is extinct. Rome and Italy will never forgive the Pope for having, as in the middle ages, called in foreign bayonets to transfix Italian breasts." * Under such circumstances, what union can be expected between the Church and the people?

We have thus endeavoured to complete our historical survey, by examining generally the present condition of the relation of the people to their respective churches. Though, at first, the total want of union

* Mazzini's Letter to Messrs. De Tocqueville and De Falloux, Ministers of France,

between them may seem to indicate a sinking and almost hopeless condition, we believe that, in the end, it will be found beneficial to religion. The present state of disunion is but the preparation for a more healthy manifestation of the Christian faith, in which practical piety, and not theoretic dogma, shall be the measure of our relation to Christ, and the warrant of our membership of his Church. Our belief in the triumph of truth, and that the Christian religion is that truth, makes us hopeful in the present seemingly cheerless state of things. We welcome every new religious separation ; for we feel it is only by a complete disintegration of the religious world as at present composed that a more perfect, earnest, faithful, all-embracing church can be founded, whose existence shall be blessing ; and whose career beneficent, merciful, and just, full of the spirit of its master, " mighty for the subduing of evil," and " the pulling down of iniquity in high places."

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

THE PRIMAL CAUSE.

THEOLOGIANs and divines have one great cause by which they account for all the sins, errors, and short-comings of man. No matter how varied the manifestation, the cause of such departures from the right line of conduct is one and indivisible. Human depravity is the easy solution of every difficulty, the grand answer for every doubtful question. To the struggling soul, torn to pieces by her own bitter questionings and doubts upon the awful mysteries of time, eternity, immortality, God, heaven, and hell, all such questionings and doubts have their origin in the depravity of the human heart. Has a man been brought up from very childhood in ignorance, and crime, and sin, the first words his infant tongue was taught to lisp those of blasphemy and swearing, prostitution, drunkenness, and theft, the first lessons of his early training into a life of misery and vice? —all are accounted for by the innate depravity of the human heart. Infidelity of intellect, and infidelity of ignorance, are alike set down to the same all-ex-

plaining cause. Now, without entering here into the discussion of this theological question, we think it far more like begging the question than affording a solution to the difficulty. The cause, it appears to us, must be sought for in far other place than this. It is well for those who live in the green pastures of the sunny land to declaim upon the human depravity of the wicked or erring unbeliever, and to deem that they have thus settled the question which, of all others, is now becoming the question of questions. We propose, then, in our present inquiry to leave altogether out of view the theologically-settled depravity, and to examine the subject as we should one entirely free from any preconceived dogma or accepted belief. This appears to us the only likely way to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion as to the cause, and the only path by which we can be directed in our inquiries as to the cure, of religious scepticism.

Human depravity being taken as the primal cause, the subsidiary causes have been generally considered to be pride, ignorance, and vice. All these may be causes, but they utterly fail to answer the great question of the alienation of a whole people from religious influence and rule. Pride will only account for a few isolated cases, which but little affect the general body of a nation. Ignorance can scarcely be said to be a cause at all. Infidelity, by its very nature, means unfaithfulness to something received and acknowledged. Ignorance cannot be faithless to what it never knew. The ignorant man can

neither be said to be faithful nor unfaithful, believing or infidel. Where he believes, his worship can scarcely be called worship; where he professes disbelief, he may be truly said to be totally ignorant of what he disbelieves. If ignorance be at all a cause, it is so in a very small and questionable degree. We may say the same of vice. Ignorance is its great parent; and the infidelity which characterizes the one may be safely referred to the other. It is true that there is learned vice; but the comparison is so small, when compared with ignorant vice, that it is scarcely worth taking into account, in our estimation of vice as a general cause. We may, therefore, quietly set these aside, and seek for its causes in other things than those to which it has been usually ascribed.

It may be laid down as an admitted truth,—one which all history and all experience substantiate,—that man is naturally religious and prone to worship. No nation, no people, however sunk in barbarism, have ever been known to exist without some mode of giving expression to this universal feeling. No matter how rude, how fantastic, and irrational to farther advanced nations their worship may appear, the fact is still as substantially proved by the fetishism of the Bushman, as by the unitive worship of the Hebrews. This religiousness being universal; this desire, nay, necessity, for worship being a characteristic of mankind, even when most uncultivated and wild,—the human depravity theory will not account for his becoming irreligious, or rather,

for forsaking the worship of his country, and the faith of her childhood, as he becomes more civilized and advanced. Yet such is the fact. The world was never in so high a state of civilization as it is at present; yet never were the mass of the people so little influenced by religious guidance and rule as now. Wherefore is this? Our religion has all the elements of progress in itself. It is of such a nature that mankind can never become so pure, so spiritual, as to exceed its purity and spirituality. It is the friend of man in all the varied phases of his career; grows with his growth; and expands in beauty, loveliness, and grace as his faculties gain in strength and power of appreciation. Yet, at the present time, the people own not their allegiance to its dominion; regulate not their lives by its spirit; nor conform to its holy mandates and spotless examples. For this departure there must be a cause, or rather many causes. Let us now endeavour to ascertain what appears to us the fundamental cause of this anomalous phenomenon.

If we look at the history of Christianity, through all the world's various acceptances of its teachings, we shall invariably find that the early supporters of the faith, or a new interpretation of the faith, were earnest, zealous, faithful, and led a pure and holy life; in practice at one with their teaching. The early Christians were renowned, in the very midst of the grossest age the world has ever seen for immorality and vice, for the extreme purity and uprightness of their lives. The pagan writers,

while they pity the superstition, laud the simplicity, holiness, and justness of the conduct of its deluded victims. Whilst adversity kept directly before them the pure character of their teacher, and the God whom He, as a kind and merciful Father, had revealed to them; while the persecutions of a common enemy caused them to unite in brotherly communion and holy fellowship,—their course was marked by all that Christ lays down as the signs of his true followers. They visited the sick, they comforted the afflicted, they relieved the poor, they consoled the prisoner; their lives and belief, their practice and theory, were one. The heathen was astonished, the scoffer was subdued, the opposer silenced. The Christians, though persecuted, were united and faithful. They kept on their way rejoicing in the Lord. Their history is beautiful. It is the history of outward conformity to an indwelling truth. They laboured hopefully, earnestly, and faithfully, to realize the kingdom of God on the earth. No picture could exceed the extreme beauty of the reality. Such, for well nigh three centuries, was the state of the Christian world. But mark the consequence. Prosperity came. Patronage from imperial emperors sought to place the manger-born upon a golden throne. Then other things were to be sought after than the purity of the faith. Wealth and riches, and high places, dominion and sovereignty, command and power; these were to be struggled for and obtained. The kingdom of earth exceeded in at-

tractions the kingdom of heaven. Temporary grandeur dazzled more than eternal happiness; present possession was more potent than future promise; the Christian religion became a church; the Church false to its ideal, its potentates and candidates became hostile to each other; those who held for the time the ear of the temporal ruler summoned his aid to fight their battles; then followed hatred, strife, and "all uncharitableness," and swiftly in the train irreligion, scepticism, and infidelity. Such is a rapid view of the course of the early Church. The history of every reformation of every sect is, with varying details, according to the circumstances of the times, to the length of the struggle and amount of the triumph, substantially the same. First, we have persecution, and with it earnestness, faith, purity, and holiness. These virtues characterize its course, till triumph over difficulties, and fair establishment in the world, leave it time and opportunity to sink into lethargy, ease, and impotency; more careful to preserve its immunities, prerogatives, and possessions, than to win souls by activeness, self-abnegation, and holiness of living. With every triumph over opposition, with every acquisition in worldly wealth, is also joined a loss of the great, original, divine spirit which actuated and guided its early endeavours to evangelize the world, to purify the corrupted faith, and to restore the rule of Christ. This is the course through which all churches, whether establishments or not, have, in the present age, passed through.

Nonconformity is no exception. Look at its early history, persecuted by a law-church, and abused by a law-church led people, and compare it with its present, not only tolerated, but triumphant condition. Look at its work and spirit then, and at its work and spirit now. This examination will bring us speedily to the conclusion, that nonconformity, much as we owe to the noble workers who dared the powers that were, is not an exception to the course which has marked the history of all religious progress since the days of Christ. But, connected with this history, something more has to be noticed, which will help us to arrive at the first great cause of infidelity. Each church reform has, at its outset, won many proselytes, not only from the old church, but from the world. Immediately after the commencement, and for the time of the adversity, the numbers of the religious world have continually increased. This has been the rule, without exception. But with every triumph of the new sects; when they have begun to sing pœans, and to triumph at their own success; then has followed a relapse; and the world has become more and more alienated from religion than ever. Its present condition fully bears out this assertion. Here is England, with its innumerable sects, its great and wealthy establishment, in the strangest, and, to the men who generally form what is considered the religious world, the most deplorable, condition in respect to religion that it has ever been. What that condition really is we have essayed briefly to examine in the pre-

ceding chapter. Our present investigation has enabled us to give what appears to us its chief cause.

The first cause of religious scepticism affecting a people to any great extent, results from the declension of its churches from their original ideal and practice, and their falseness thereto.

In order fully to appreciate the truth, or test the falsehood of this conclusion, it will be necessary to look for a moment or two at what is the original ideal of a church, and how far the at present existent churches have departed from that ideal. Happily for this purpose, we have an immutable and universally-acknowledged standard. The New Testament is in this respect the final appeal of all parties. To that, then, we propose to look, and by its teachings of what a church of Christ should be, and the duties it requires from Christian bodies, to see how far we are borne out in our reasoning by its authority.

The first idea of a Christian church derived from the New Testament is, that it is a great brotherhood of men, having one common father, God, and acknowledging one common master, even Jesus Christ. Its great lesson, consequent upon this idea, is strict spiritual equality. "God is no respecter of persons." In the Christian community there is no "great and no small." All are alike equal. Rich and poor meet on an equal footing. The king and beggar alike bow down together. The velvet-apparelled and the ragged-coated are equally precious

in the eye of God. No worldly distinction, no social difference of position, are tolerated in His house. All there have one Father, one Brother, and all are brethren. The Apostle has declared woe to the church that dares to place a rich man in its best places, and bid a poor man sit beneath the footstool. The widow's mite is a lesson of perennial beauty and truth ; more valuable in the kingdom of heaven than the superfluous thousands of the millionaire. What a teaching of God's estimate does this fact convey ! The church is the common treasury of all who give to God ; there the widow's mite is as acceptable, as potent, as the lord's estate. It is a beautiful whole, of which all the members are equal. There is no priest, no master ; no flattery to power, no subserviency to wealth, no scorn to humbleness, no superciliousness to poverty, should be, nay can be, there. In respect to its members, such is a Christian church. Measured by the New Testament standard, such is a Christian community ; one body, having diverse members, some more vital for the preservation of its life, but all useful ; to be tended, cared for, watched over, and preserved.

Now, what is the fact ? Where shall we find such a church, or anything approximating to such a church, extant ? Visit them, examine their course of proceedings, search into the practice of all ; and if but one be found answering to such an ideal, then shout for joy, for salvation is there. But none such can be found. In them all are worldly distinctions and worldly pride. The preacher may

read from the holy Book that all men are equal, but they never believe it, for they never practise it. The rich and well-dressed man is set in a high place, the poor and meanly clad is set down there beneath the footstool. The widow's mite is nowhere estimated as the "gold, and frankincense, and myrrh," of the kings of the East. The balance by which they are measured is not the balance of God, but the balance of the world. The conduct pursued towards poor and rich are not the same. Does a poor man sin, he must be visited, reprimanded, and perhaps excluded; but is the same sin committed by a rich man, then is it delicate ground: he may withdraw his support; it would be injurious to the interest of the Association; he subscribes so much a year; we cannot spare his patronage. The sin may be black as hell, compared with his poor brother's; but unnoticed, unproved, it must pass smirk-faced down the world, because the cause needs, and the interest requires, that the purse of the wealthy sinner should be often and widely opened. Such cases are amongst us without number. Unblushingly they are performed, week by week, in what professes to be the church of Him who was without "sin or guile." "Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites; for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte," while you neglect the simplest duty of your Lord, and then wonder at the infidelity of the age, and talk of human depravity and the fearful wickedness of the heart of man! Need we not wonder that yet so

many are of the kingdom? Need we wonder that uneducated men, seeing such things done by men who call Christ Lord, should refuse not only to receive such men, but even the religion they teach? We need not speculate much upon the cause of infidelity, with such things patent before the eyes of the world.

We have now looked at the Church in relation to its own members; we will do the same in its relation to the world.

The great object and end of the Christian dispensation is to destroy the world. Every one will understand what is meant by this phrase. Now the question is, how does the Gospel propose to effect this? Simply by winning all hearts, by its beauty and love, to its beautiful and loving faith. For accomplishing this its machinery is simple, but how effective! The appealing of the heart to the heart is its great instrument. Love is its basis, its means, and its end. Everywhere love is the word. Love thy brother, love thy neighbour, love thy enemy. The incessant cry of holy John is, "Little children, love one another." This spirit is to extend beyond their own church. They are to "seek and to save." By their works is the world to know them. This is not so much to be done by administering large sums in charity. The early Christians had little enough of this world's gear to give; but they had what ever has been, and ever will be, more powerful over the hearts of men,—patience, kindness, long-suffering,

and forbearance. They had the sympathetic heart, the helping hand, the consoling tongue; they breathed the word of promise in the ear, and *kept* it to the heart. Wherever there was sin and sorrow, and suffering, they were there, doing the work of their master. With "the publican, and harlot, and sinner," they consorted, that they might win souls. Their constant labours were with the poor. They remembered, that "inasmuch as ye have done it to the least of these, ye have done it unto me." "The poor ye have always with you." "They counted not their lives dear to them," so that they spent it in the work of God and man. "Silver and gold they had none;" yet look at the work they did. Let it not be said that they were specially sent for such work. This is no excuse for the present impotency of the churches. By using the same means the same results will always follow, for they are promised by Him "who cannot lie." Has not Christ said, that wherever He is lifted up the people shall draw nigh? We have the same Christ to lift up, the same God to give us strength; yet the "common people do not hear us gladly;" they do not draw nigh, but stand afar off, or walk down on the other side. The relation of the Christian Church to its own members is false, and its relation to the world is still more false.

If we look at the churches in this relation, what shall we find? A vast machinery effecting but little; an immense noise with little work, a vast outlay with small return. The money employed

in this country for religious purposes in all their varieties is enormous. The amount spent in Foreign Missions and Foreign Bible Societies can scarcely be estimated. Yet look at our heathen population, our barbaric ignorance at home, untaught, unchristianized. Truly we "compass sea and land to make one proselyte," while we leave thousands to die,

"Unhousel'd, unanointed, unaneal'd,"

at our own doors. Happily, to this neglect the churches are awake, and much has been done of late to effect the reformation of the hitherto untouched part of our population. But even in this labour do we detect the true spirit of Christ at work? In many cases the answer would be, undoubtedly we do. In the majority, alas! the spirit of emulation and rivalry is the soul of the movement. Such a congregation spends so much a year in home missionary work, therefore we must devote so much to that particular work. There is no soul in the labour. Hence follow all the ill results of such unchristian Christianity: improper persons employed; men entirely unacquainted with the people; having no tastes, no feelings, no sympathies, in common. Failure is stamped on the front of labours undertaken from such motives, and carried out by such instruments. Mechanical forces are scarcely sufficient of themselves to effect mechanical ends; how much less can they carry on successfully the labours of spiritual duties.

Yet is this the constant course of our churches. Organizations are formed, officers are appointed, mighty sums are subscribed, much noise is made, and then the work of Christ is said to be done. It is but a splendidly-adorned corpse. The vital powers are dead; the love which tires not is away; the soul that converts mankind is wanting; the elixir which brings everlasting life to the dying has lost its power; the restless, indomitable perseverance, which will not relax its labours until its work be done, is but rarely found amongst us. The holy war is waged with worldly weapons. God's battles are fought in the arena of strife, party discord, and Exeter-Hall abuse. The pure apostolic spirit, which converts into a jewel more precious than "the ruby, the onyx, the sapphire," the common dross of the world; which offers itself a willing sacrifice, so that it may win the soul of the sinner,—is seldom active in the labours of the churches. Their real, compared with their ideal, is sad in the extreme. No harmony, no union, no love. Where they do work the motive is questionable, or perhaps scarcely questionable, for mostly it stands manifest on the face of their endeavours. The numberless cases of charity withdrawn because the recipient has ceased to be of the sect; the friendships broken up because one of the parties has changed his views upon some theological point upon which no two have been known exactly to agree; the forsakings of brethren because they have "lapsed;" these, and others

which might easily be enumerated, prove the motive power which animates and directs. In the circumstances, and at the very time, when the true Christian would grow more restless in his endeavours, more kind in his love, more sympathizing in his conduct, do the churches forsake, cast aside, and neglect. Thus their relationship to the world is as false as the relationship to their own community. Without using the weapons of Christ, they expect to win his battles, and when signally beaten by the forces of the world, seek anywhere rather than in their false application of a principle and an idea the cause of their discomfiture. We repeat it thoughtfully and advisedly, that under the present condition of the churches, the marvel is that so many still adhere to religion; their numbers are a demonstration at once of the subduing power of the teachings of the Gospel and the natural religiousness of man. In spite of such a want of really Christian effort in the religious rulers of the world, their condition is positively prosperous; but negatively, alas, how sad their state! If judged by what they have, then, we might indeed say they had done their work; but judged by what they have not, they are impotent and weak. It is a proof of the truth of our charges, that the most thoughtful, earnest, and pious of the religious, are everywhere seeking to unravel the cause of the Church's failure with the world, and to propound to them some plan of united action, whereby their original

strength and efficacy may be restored. We may now say boldly, that the people are opposed to the Church; and the cause of its opposition is in the Church itself.

We are now somewhat better prepared to accept or reject the proposition that the chief cause of the present wide-spread infidelity is the "declension of the churches from their original ideal and practice, and their falseness thereto."

What are the facts derived from our survey of the Church's true relation to its own members and the world; and the manner in which it gives practical bearing to that relationship; and what influence has this upon the religious belief of the people?

We have seen that throughout all the ages of its existence it has been powerful, in the Christian sense of the word, while it continued faithful to its own divine idea; that in exact proportion that it has allowed the world to stain, and sully, and conceal that idea, it has become weak; has lost its hold upon the heart of man; has ceased to be the guide and director of his conduct; and has ended at last in a total alienation between itself and the people. Through these courses we have seen that all churches and all sects have passed. Purity, holiness, and zeal, have marked their early career; with these have been religiously, success, progress, and triumph. Thus has followed—as they became outwardly strong, powerful, established—interior laxity, sectarian zeal, and party-interest; the accompaniments of these have been the departure

from, or decline of its original animating spirit, and the loss of influence to attract the world to a religious life. In the one case, theory and practice agree; in the other, practice has been opposed to theory, and the natural consequence has been the result. When faithful themselves, they had a believing and faithful community; and spoke to the people as "men having authority;" and they won golden triumphs for the Lord. But faithless to their own doctrine, false to their own idea, with greater external means, they effected a much less result; with more noise, they did less work; and daily as they still farther departed from the measure of God, they also daily lost power and influence, and the breach between themselves and the people has continually widened, and now in its present mighty gulf has far from reached its culminating point of divergence. The law of nature—progression, or retrogression—applies to the churches. They cannot stand still. Either on they must go with the ages, or they must lag behind. That they have done the latter, facts sufficiently and irrefragably demonstrate. Their duty is to seize the spirit and tendency of an age, and to direct them in proper channels. Their duty is to be first in the field of every ameliorating and beneficial movement. They should be the friends of education and enlightenment. Every political reform should find in them advocates. Every philanthropic work should find its principal strength in their advocacy and support. The present awful social evils of society should have them for their

direct assailants, and most irreconcilable enemies. The poor, the afflicted, the oppressed, and the outcast, should receive from them care, support, liberty, and consolation. Everywhere should their very shadow, like the Apostle's, shed benediction, healing, and joy. The haters of falsehood in all its manifold phases, they should be true as the immutable truth they profess. No interest, no party influence, no power of earth or hell, should make them swerve from their true course one step, either to the right or the left. The weak should find in them support; the wavering confirmation in the truth; the doubting, kindness and brotherly assistance in their terrible soul struggle, till deliverance come, though long years of patience and consolation be needed; the sinner through ignorance, or misdirected knowledge, should find joy and comfort in the very countenance of the teachers of Christ; from them should every want of man find alleviation and remedy. The churches should be knit together by one spirit, the love of God; should work together inspired by one hope, the love of man, and animated by one soul-consuming desire, his salvation from ignorance, want, and sin, which is death. Such, it appears to us, the servants of Christ should be. Scorning shame, poverty, abuse, misunderstanding, and misrepresentations, for the purpose of "guiding man heavenward, which, after all, is the one real governing of them on this God's earth."*

* Carlyle, The New Downing Street.

Now we ask solemnly, is such the state of our religious teachers at the present time? Are the churches characterized by this high chivalry of godliness? Are they prepared, or have they shown themselves prepared, to sink their own worldly powers, and their own worthless differences, for the sake of winning man? Never. From month to month, and year to year, they meet, and anathematize the Pope, German philosophy, modern infidelity, socialism, and the devil; and then continue calmly on their own jog-trot way, increasing their funds, building churches, printing Bibles, sending missionaries to the antipodes; then stroke their chins with self-complacency and satisfaction, at the good day's work done. The Church has for some centuries now been little more than a gross, palpable, and huge falsehood on the earth; receiving rations for work never done; false to their Lord; false to their teaching; false to the world; and, what is far worse, false to themselves; false to the "God which is within them." This charge is a strong one, and may appear to be strongly given. Glad indeed should we be to have it proved too severe. It is not from any desire to rip up her wounds, or to expose her weakness, that we have investigated the present condition of the Church. The only cause has been truthfully to answer a question every day becoming more vital in its importance. This we have done without regard or care as to where it led us, providing we arrived at a truer solution of the difficulty. The only one to be found at all answering to our idea of the mag-

nitude of the evil, is not the one usually ascribed ; but is to be sought for in the conduct of those who have undertaken a work they have utterly failed to effect. The churches have had for their end and aim the winning of the world to Christ ; instead of this we have a world alienated from his teachings, his doctrines, and his practice ; ready to deny his authority, and to accept any mechanical scheme which offers at all to raise it from its present sad and lamentable condition. Everything tends to prove the truth of the cause which we have assigned. The utter failure of their labours, in face of the assertion of Him who cannot lie, show they have falsely fulfilled their trust. Measured by any standard ; judged by any evidence, internal or external ; applying fact and experience to help us in our difficulty ; all point to one and the same cause,—the falseness of the churches to their own ideal.

We now briefly sum up the results of the present chapter, and then proceed to investigate the other causes which have helped to produce the existing infidelity which characterizes the age.

We first examined the causes generally given to account for this spiritual phenomenon, and found them entirely incapable of giving a satisfactory solution ; we then gave what appeared to us the chief cause, and found that the historic evidence furnished by an examination of the courses through which the various churches had passed, supported

the truth of this definition, that evidence being the fact that all churches, while they continued true to their ideal, were honoured, loved, and revered; that they exercised great and beneficent influence in the world; that when they departed from that ideal, when they had other "interests" to maintain, other "causes" to support, other "ends" to labour for, than the interest, cause, and end of Christ, they began to lose their influence and authority over man; ceased to command his honour, love, and reverence; and that, in proportion as they grew in falseness to their ideal, so the alienation between themselves and the people increased. We then examined what was the true relationship of a church, first in respect to its members, and then with regard to the world, and endeavoured to ascertain how far the existing churches carry out such relationship; and found them unable to pass the ordeal on New Testament principles. We found them in both respects false to their own accepted law. Judged by their own standard, they were found entirely wanting. We then glanced at a few things in which the churches should be prominently and earnestly employed to carry out and realize, and found them in scarcely any felt and palpable manner using their vast wealth, machinery, and power, for the only legitimate object in the attainment of which they should be used. This we saw was the case in all the different religious denominations now extant; and all together form

such a mass of accumulated evidence, that we now boldly declare the truth of our opening proposition: "The first cause of religious scepticism affecting a people, to any great extent, results from the declension of its churches from their original ideal and practice, and their falseness thereto."

CHAPTER II.

BIBLIOLATRY.

MEN in all ages have too often allowed the letter of their religious books, more or less, to be a hindrance to the free development of their spirit. History offers no example of a nation in which this has not been the case. The power of seizing and applying a fact is a common one; while the power to seize and embody its underlying truth is far from being common. Thus the majority of men always more readily conform to a written law, and adhere to its strict letter, than make its contained spirit an active and vital force, guiding and correcting their interior life. Wherever a book is received as containing the will of God revealed to man, this is perhaps an inevitable consequence. The veneration at first given to the Spirit which inspired will be transferred to the words in which that inspiration is recorded. The symbol usurps the place of the symbolized; and, as in the history of all idolatries man begins by creating for himself a visible representation of the Invisible, and by a natural course ends in worshipping the representative in the place of the represented, such has become the state of things in respect to the Bible. The doctrine of plenary inspiration, so largely

believed in by the religious world, has endowed the very letters and words of the book with a sacredness and significance which would have made its writers shudder with horror. In our zeal for the purity and strength of the Protestant faith, we have entirely forgotten that the writers of the Holy Book were men like to ourselves, subject to all the sins and errors of ourselves ; having like passions, and subject to like prejudices. This, the human side of their nature, must necessarily characterize whatever is revealed through their instrumentality. Water will always participate in the impurity of the vessel in which it is contained. So all matters communicated by God to man, when re-communicated by him to his fellow-man, will necessarily be tinged with the peculiar feelings of the human vehicle of transmission. His passions, his desires, his hopes, his fears, his high or low state of spiritual capacity, aye, and even his very idiosyncrasies, will, more or less, mark the Revelation thus communicated. Yet, notwithstanding the acknowledgment of the by the writers themselves, modern Protestantism has demanded tacit belief in the divine truthfulness of every fact recorded and in the ascription of every act done, every crime perpetrated, by this Old Testament writers, being carried out not only by the permission, but through the immediate and direct command, of the Lord. Every attempt to separate what is purely human from the divine,—what has been caused by human passion and error, from what is immutable and absolute verity,—has

been, and is still, designated as sacrilegious, blasphemous, infidel; a tampering with the holy things of God; and entirely to be deprecated and condemned. Alas, this Bibliolatry, as it has been well designated, has produced the most disastrous results in the religious life of the world! Rationalism owes to this latter worship its origin; and infidelity has received a powerful auxiliary, from this unwise demand on the part of the supporters of a divine Revelation.

Here let me guard myself from misapprehension and mistake. Let it not be supposed that I deny Revelation. I firmly believe in Revelation; believe that God employed man for special missions in the world, and inspired them for that purpose; but that man communicated the message in his own words, and according to his own power of becoming more or less one with the truths delivered. Therefore I believe that the spirit of the Book is of God; contains His laws for the guidance of man; is His code; owes its origin to divine power, and its force to divine authority; but that mingled with this holy message are historic records of a people nowise famous for the superior piety of their life; for the high morality of their conduct; for the mercy and loving-kindness which should characterize a people who professed to be in direct communication with the Holy One, and to perform every act under his guidance and control. It is these records, purely historical, and illustrating the "ways of God to man" in the same manner as all other

historic records of nations do, which, guided by the Spirit, man should endeavour to separate from the higher teaching and the immutable truths which the Book of Books contains. This must be done; and the longer it is delayed the more difficult will be the work, and the less influence will it have upon the people, when at last necessity shall, with its iron hand, scourge the teachers of the people to perform this long-desiderated labour. This adhesion to the spirit, which causes man to interpret every part of the Book as of equal importance, because the whole came from God, has been, and still continues to be, the fruitful source of unnumbered evils to the cause of religion, and the progress of spiritual truth. The difficulties which surround the subject are many and manifold. But it is far better that we look at them full in the face, and grapple with them manfully, than suffer them to be stumbling-blocks in the way of religionizing the world. We therefore propose to look somewhat more in detail into the question of Bibliolatry, in order to ascertain how far its spirit is injurious to the attainment of a more widely accepted and active religious life amongst the people.

Bibliolatry is of comparatively modern origin. The early Roman Church had always preserved their people from its effects. By uniting the teaching of the Church, and the influence of the Spirit, as equally essential parts of the whole of religious forces, each of them being equally necessary for the redemption of man, and as complementary of,

and supplemental to, each other, it prevented man's attention being entirely devoted to the Book, which has become the characteristic of the Reformed Churches, and which is now carried to such extremes, in the extreme antagonism to Rome, as to tend ultimately to produce a return to the old church or a departure into complete latitudinarianism. The wisdom or policy of the Roman Church in making the Bible a sealed book we are not to discuss here, further than by the passing remark, that we entirely disagree with that wisdom, and that it needs not, in order to escape one extreme, to rush into the opposite. The fact, however, is certain, that Bibliolatry is of Protestant origin, culture, and growth. The cry of The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible, and the acceptance of that cry as the peculiar characteristic of the Protestant Churches, clearly indicates where we are to seek for the cause of its existence. This cry and its acceptance has led to the exaltation of the letter above the spirit; and as the Jew of old had his epoch when the Lord ceased to inspire prophets, so have we an epoch when the Lord ceased to be livingly and inspiringly present amongst us. We have inclosed the Eternal and the Infinite in a few sheets of printed paper, bound together and called "The Book," and declared that there, and there alone, are we to look for the Lord. With us, God *was*, not *is* *; He has ceased to act immediately

* Emerson.

upon the world ; having revealed Himself and his will to the world through Moses and Jesus, He has now ceased to visit the earth, and is no longer a living God to us. This view of the matter has doubtless led good and holy men to turn away from the revelations of science, and declare them ungodly and infidel ; this has led good and holy men to wage warfare against the other great Book, which God has written with his very hands, and set here as a perennial record of his power, his kingdom, and his glory ; this has led many good and holy men to a rejection of the written Book, because they have been unable to reconcile the revelations of the one with those of the other ; and has, to a much greater extent than is commonly supposed, led to the present state of the people in respect to religion.

God is immutable. He cannot change. His course of action towards man is the same to-day as yesterday, and will be so for ever. Man's power to interpret Him varies with his progress made in civilization and spiritual culture. The God of every people will be to them the union of their highest capabilities of appreciation. In Him will centre their highest notion of virtue. He will be the ideal of their divinest thoughts. Thus we may know the condition at which a people has arrived when we know the form under which they worship the Supreme. Their god will always be the measure of their moral greatness and spiritual purity. Thus God is to every nation, at the time being, its highest conception. Is bravery the greatest virtue ?

their God will be the Lord of Hosts. We may carry this process through all ages. In every country shall we find their deity endowed with some attributes peculiarly characteristic of its people. Yet God changes not. Man is the mutable quantity, God the immutable. With new knowledge, and increased spiritualism, we have higher, purer notions of the Creator; but the change is entirely in ourselves. The new powers and new virtues are all of our acquirement. Yet, knowing as we do, that God "knows no change, nor shadow of turning," we may be sure that any command attributed by an ancient people to God, which is found by a later and more advanced standard of comprehension entirely contradictory to the character of a divine ruler, could in no wise have proceeded from Him. Thus God is justice: no order which had the least taint of injustice in its carrying out could ever have been uttered by the Eternal Just. Again: God is love: no law which contains the spirit of hatred, of revenge, or any of the other evil passions of men, could by any possibility find place in a statute book coming from heaven. We may take one more illustration. God is the maker, the common father, of all the children of earth; therefore no revelation which represents Him as being the chooser of a peculiar family, or tribe, or race, and making them his favoured people, to the destruction by sword and flame of other nations, can be a true revelation from God, or can to a Christian be the God whom all acknowledge as the Father of

Christ. The two natures are entirely irreconcilable. The Jehovah of the Hebrews in no manner answers to the God of Christ. The two Beings are separated by a gulf wider than the narrative relates divided Lazarus from Dives. But let us a little more closely examine the question of this difference.

First, then, as to the Jehovah of the Hebrews. The great characteristic of the Jews, after they were rescued from Egyptian bondage by the mighty hand of Moses, was their love of war. Their chiefest man after Moses was a warrior. Their representations of God would therefore participate in this national character. They did so. He was the Lord God of Hosts. He was the bestower of victory, and the disposer of the events of battle. Majesty and might of a physical nature were some of his attributes. The arm of Joshua, and the sword of Gideon were powers He employed to the utter spoiling of the enemy—the self-sought enemy—of the Jew; alike the children of his creation and the breath of his nostrils. Thunder was in his right hand, and the lightning he grasped in his left. His voice shook the mountains from their foundations, and his presence was a consuming flame. Everywhere is He clothed in terror, and girt with destruction. He thunders on Sinai, even when He is represented as giving laws to man. The whole records prove, indeed, that He was the very God of the Jews. Commands, that it is impossible to ascribe to a holy, pure, and merciful Deity, are said to have been uttered by the

Lord; and alas, too faithfully performed by the Hebrews. They are commanded "to spoil the Egyptians," to "revenge the Lord of his enemies," to "utterly destroy nations and peoples," to "slay unoffending women and helpless children." In a word, as we have no inclination to pursue the subject, all that we are wont to associate with the capricious and changing deities of heathen mythology, is here attributed to the Lord of Heaven. He is to be propitiated by sacrifice. Every sin that is disobedience to the law is to be expiated by an offering. The Holy of Holies is to be reconciled to erring man by the means of slaughtered beasts, and the altar is to be continually stained by the blood of the sacrificial victims. Then we have burnt-offerings, wave-offerings, heave-offerings; a subtly-constructed graduated scale, by which the depth of every sin may be told, and the amount of expiation known. It is true the picture has another and brighter side. God is not always endowed with these mortal passions, feelings, and mutabilities. He is often spoken of as the God of holiness, purity, and truth; and the attributes given are entirely in accordance with such a being. We are told our great duty is to "love Him with all our heart, and mind, and strength, and to love our neighbour as ourself." He "loveth all the children of men." He is the Creator, Supporter, and Upholder of all mankind. He wills not the death of any sinner, but that all repent and live. He delighteth not in sacrifice: is boundless in mercy.

He maketh the heart glad, and filleth the earth with his blessings. He is a God of love. He watcheth over, and careth for the lowliest of his sons. His countenance is gracious, and his eye beameth with loving-kindness. His mercy is exhaustless, and his forgiveness endureth for ever. He delighteth in mercy; He pardoneth iniquity, transgression, and sin. We are to praise Him for his goodness, and his wonderful works to the children of men. But what does this prove? Simply that the old Hebrew prophets were men, subject to all the weakness of man; and, in their theocratic mode of viewing all things, ascribed all to Him who made the heavens and the earth, and filled even the depths of the sea with his glory. He was to them the author alike of evil and good. They failed to separate what arose from human passions, desires, and ambitions, from the true workings of God in the soul, and declared all acts as alike emanating from, and inspired by, his direct and immediate inspiration; and often visible appearance and audible command were given as the reason of actions, to which only the belief that they were commanded by God could have induced the Israelites to yield obedience, and posterity to turn aside from the cruelty, to become blind to their utter irreconcilableness with the nature of God.

But what of God as revealed to us in the New Testament? Oh, what a freshness comes over the soul as we turn to its divine pages! What love,

what mercy, what attractiveness breathes from every leaf, and is redolent in every verse ! There God is love. He is the father of Christ, and our father. His Son would have covered the world as the hen her young with her wings. Who have seen me, have seen the Father. The Father and I are one. He forgiveth the sinner seventy and seven times. He is no respecter of persons ; he loves the whole family of man. There is joy in heaven over every sinner that repenteth. Love one another, even as your Father in heaven loveth you. We might extract almost the whole book. Christ is the visible embodiment of love. The world is to know his disciples because they love one another ; and this they are to do because God is love. Let it not be said that the world was more prepared for juster notions of God. This might be the case, but changes not the nature of the question. God is the same from everlasting to everlasting. Nothing in violation of his eternal nature can proceed from Him, no matter what the condition of man as respects civilization. Nor will it avail to say that reason is imperfect. We grant it ; grant it as fully as may be required. Still the question remains the same. Is it consistent with the idea of God, the Father, Creator, and Protector of all mankind, to order what is in direct antagonism to the spirit of a father, creator, and protector ? Is it consistent with any notion we can form of God, that He would command one people to spoil, to murder, to exterminate another people ? We have no wish to look upon God as a

mere abstraction of virtue; God as a cold, silent, unsympathising spectator of the world He has created. We believe that He continually reveals Himself to man,—that He revealed Himself to the men of old, for special and important purposes; but we cannot believe that He commanded them to execute the deeds recorded in the Bible, as done in his name, and under his guidance. The arguments *à priori*, and *à posteriori*, are alike against the belief. The internal consciousness is against it; the higher revelation of the Old Testament is against it; the teachings of Christ are against it. Reason and faith alike reject it; and what the heart in the awful moments of self-examination revolts at, can never be true of the Lord of life, the God of mercy, justice, and truth.

We now proceed to the practical application of these remarks, and to their bearing upon the question of religious unbelief.

The statement that Bibliolatry is one of the causes of the present state of the people in relation to religion, required that we should make the examination which we have. That examination has led us to the conclusion that there are recorded in the Bible commands there said to have been given directly by God to the Israelites, totally irreconcilable with his nature as the Creator and guardian of the human race. The consequence that results from any demand, that if we receive the Book as the revelation of the Supreme will to man, we must receive all that it contains as emanating from Him,

unmixed with anything purely human, has been what might well have been anticipated, a weakening of the respect of man for the Book, and on the part of many a total rejection of it as a revelation at all. In this question, again, it appears to us that religion has suffered much more from its friends than its opposers. The modern cry of the Book, the *whole* Book, and nothing but the Book, has sent away many a pious heart, bleeding, from the Church. This cause has acted much more widely than some imagine, and its effect has been of a much more extensive kind. Thousands who could never follow a learned argument upon evidences, and metaphysical solution of such discrepancies and difficulties, quickly perceive any antagonism between an ideal and its reality. Now an ideal of God can never reach the reality. No conceptions that we can form can ever attain the "height of that great argument." Yet when we see even the poor ideal we can form contradicted by the written Word, we must inevitably question the truth of the Word. We cannot lower our ideal; that were sacrilege. We are then left to the only conclusion at which we, consistently with God's governance of the world, can arrive: that mingled with his communication of the eternal truths necessary for man's guidance here, is much of man's own, which is thereby subjected to the law which rules man's imperfect condition, and is in complete accordance with that imperfection. The demand that we shall receive all as coming from God, and

of equal truth and importance in a spiritual sense as having proceeded directly from the Divine inspiration specially conferred, has tended not a little to produce the large open, and much larger secret disbelief which is at present so much deplored, and so much calculated to produce the most deplorable results for the future. We yield in veneration to the Holy Book to none; we yield in our love to God to none; in the firmness of our belief in revelation, resurrection, and life eternal, to none; in God's continual watching over the world and all created things our faith is unshakable; in the manifestation of the Divine will in its revelation through the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, have continual belief, comfort, and support; yet it appears to us that we do not honour God most, when we profess belief in that from which the heart revolts, and which the reason impugns. The constant assertion that if we reject a part, we must reject the whole; that every part is alike the direct revelation of God; the bowing down to the letter which killeth, with an utter forgetfulness of the spirit, which alone giveth life; the repeated charge that we have only to believe and not to question; the daily making of truth itself a heresy; in a word, Bibliolatry in all its phases has done, and is still doing, vital injury to the cause of a daily, earnest, and vital religious life manifesting itself amongst us.

What we have said in respect to the Old Testa-

ment, applies, though perhaps with less force, to the New. The various doctrines which men have professed to have derived from the simple teachings of Christ; the clothing round that pure and childlike religion the immense garments of metaphysical dogma, which the ingenuity and philosophy of every age has promulgated, have turned many a seeking, bleeding heart from its persecutors of everlasting life. The various interpretations doctors of divinity have given of the mysteries of the Trinity, the atonement, and justification, have prevented thousands from receiving the faith. Men, whom Jesus himself would have welcomed with a blessing, have been cast out of the visible Church, because they failed to see the nature of the immaculate conception, and other subjects of kindred importance, in the same light which the church or sect desired. How many have the miracles excluded from the fold? We might multiply examples, all resulting from a worship of the letter, and making the spirit subordinate thereto. These things do not apply to the wise and learned only, they reach, and react upon the foolish and ignorant. In places where religious teachers little dream of such things, are questionings of this nature rife; and are daily increasing; daily producing a larger number of disbelievers, and daily widening the gulf between the Church and the people.

We now sum up the results of the present chapter. We have found that there is among modern

Protestants an undue veneration for the written Word. This veneration has, in general, become so blind, as to make what were beautiful and praise worthy, exercised in just limits, degenerate into an idolatry. We have enquired whether the Book justifies this prostration of the feelings of the heart, and the judgment of the intellect, and found that it does not;—that the ideal of the Supreme Ruler, revealed even in its own pages, is sometimes degraded by acts ascribed to, and commands said to have been dictated by Him. We have seen that, if judged by the New Testament ideal and revelation, the divergence is still farther from that ideal;—that God is immutable, and cannot command at any time, whatever the state or condition of man, anything which at another time contradicts the revelation He makes of Himself. Many things related in the Old Testament do thus contradict that revelation, and cannot, therefore, have proceeded from God; but are the minglings of the human element with divine truth. The assertion made by the religious world, that all parts are of like truth, and of equal importance, has produced disbelief, infidelity, and alienation, amongst the people. And, finally, that the making religion depend upon metaphysical doctrines and dogmas, instead of a pious, earnest, and practical holy life, has been the parent of much evil, and a great cause of the present indifference, or antagonism to religion displayed amongst, not only the people of this country, but the European populations generally.

Thus not the least among the causes of infidelity do we place modern Bibliolatry*.

* "To prove the infallibility of a book that contains a hundred thousand propositions, is evidently, by any testing of its contents, a process which would need Omniscience in the inquirer. It must, then, be either simply *assumed*, without any attempt at proof, or verification (which is by far the commonest method), or it must be rested on *external credentials*, which, treating it as a sealed book, attempt nevertheless to establish, *à priori*, that all which it contains must be true. No man is qualified to judge on an arduous and complex argument who does not see that the latter, even if admissible in principle, is beyond the powers of many, and vastly more difficult to the few, than any (strictly personal) questions of practical life. But an intermediate method is highly popular; to set forth the excellence of a *great deal* in the Bible to which *consciences bear witness*, and then deduce that all persons are wicked who deny the authority and infallibility of the book. This, forsooth, from those who pity, scorn, or dread the man, who says that conscience is, after all, the best guide! This from those who are actually maintaining, that when conscience and the book come into collision, we must believe conscience to be wrong and the book right! For that is the whole meaning of its 'authority;' since, until such collision arises, no practical trial of authority can be made. But in this way every religious system can guarantee its infallibility to us. Romanism, or Mohammedanism, has many points which our consciences approve; therefore each of these systems is divine and infallible, therefore we are to believe the system in preference to conscience when the two clash! No internal and moral argument, appealing to conscience, can ever rightly supersede and dethrone conscience; in fact, a doctrine which aims at this, under the name of an 'Authentic Revelation,' aims to destroy our moral sensibilities. If *because* conscience approves something in the Bible, we are to reverse the Bible, it must be conceded, that if in anything conscience dissents, we must withhold reverence and approval."—The Soul: her Sorrows and Aspirations, by Francis William Newman, chap.:i. page 60. 2nd Edition.

CHAPTER III.

CHURCH ESTABLISHMENTS.

It may appear strange to those who are accustomed to consider that the great use and end of church establishments is, to preserve and increase the religion of a nation, to find them alleged as one of the causes of infidelity. Yet to us it is undoubtedly clear that not only they are so, but that it is an inevitable consequence of their existence. This might be proved both by *à priori*, and *à posteriori* arguments. For, taking the first of these methods, what are church establishments, and what, from their very nature, are they calculated to effect? The first question is readily answered by that solver of all difficulties, history. In all countries, under all creeds and circumstances, they have had a peculiar affinity. This is readily understood when we consider that their object has been similar in every nation,—the subjugation of the mind of man to one particular mode of interpreting the eternal truths of life, death, and immortality; and thereby rendering the world obedient to priestly domination and a clerical hierarchy. It is a piece of great folly to declare that religion is the invention of priests. This can never be, for it is a necessity of man, and therefore universal as the race. It is beyond all human

power to generate religion ; but it is not beyond human power to mould the reception given by man to religions, and to make a people the dupes of their own faith and trustfulness. Everywhere this has been the case. The primal idea has been of God, but in what manner that idea should receive outward revealment, and how far it should spiritualize a people, priests have declared. The revealed truth is from heaven ; but its vestments, its symbols, must necessarily be of earth. Of this necessity, the Levites of all nations have made great but maleficent use. For let us suppose a church established, and protected by the civil power ; what follows ? This : its hierarchy will have drawn up creeds, rituals, ceremonies, articles of belief, and confessions of faith. Their care will be to preserve these in their original form. Every power which may be at their command will be unscrupulously used to increase their own influence, and perpetuate their rule. All endeavours to get a little more light than they decree shall shine upon the world ; all attempts to make the truth more clear, more simple than their metaphysical clothing, and initiated jargon, will all meet with persecution, anathema, and death. The Church and its interpretation, before the Bible and the soul of man, or the spirit of God working in man. Ignorance is their auxiliary, and they have become its avowed friends. Knowledge would weaken their power, and they are always found its most implacable enemies. They bind the spirit of God in their letter of interpretation.

The only channel through which it can flow is the one their hands have marked out. The ever-living truths of God become traditionary lore; and the world must be the slave of a past with whose ideas, feelings, and ways, it has not the least sympathy. The wish of Moses in its awful beauty, and the realization of Christ in its stillmore awful beauty;—the cry of the ancient prophet, “that all the Lord’s people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them;” and the declaration of the Holy One that all were priests to God, meet with no support, credence, or practical faith in established churches. Such a belief would destroy their need, their pretensions, and their influence. Spirit must be bound for them to rule. The freedom of each soul to search the Scriptures as commanded, they all practically repudiate. Some more consistently declare the people incompetent to search; others less so insist that they are, and send them heart-sore to the task; but woe to them if they find other than what they were sent to seek. “Quench not the Spirit,” says the Apostle. Law-churches not only quench the spirit, but they destroy it; prevent its manifestation. Nothing, in a word, can be more injurious to religion in its purity, influence and vitality, than an hierarchy supported by civil authority, having creeds, rituals, articles, confessions, &c., which are declared to contain “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth,” which to question is heresy, and to doubt is damnation. Let it not be said that experience alone has led to this conclusion;

reasoning upon the nature of the question, and what it involves, would lead to the same.

We now take a church established, having its own hierarchy, and all that such an institution implies. It follows, as a consequence, that the church becomes a corporation. It has interests to maintain, position to preserve, conquests to acquire. Temporalities and offices, and prebends and posts of honour, and situations, lucrative and abounding with worldly influence and power, are to be obtained, it may be by learning, piety, industry, and merit; but surely by cunning, intrigue, favouritism, and wealth. Mankind becomes classified. Clergy and laity are separate and distinct, having their different courses clearly defined; and while the more privileged may profit by undertakings which, if the division were rigidly kept by the dividing party, would be called secular; the other may in no way intrench upon the path which arrogance and pride, and too often something worse, have designated sacred. Hence follow mutual distrust and discord; in fine, a denial of the right of the ruling party to arrogate to themselves the prerogatives and privileges which they claim and have so long, to the injury of man's advancement, enjoyed. Hence follow controversies, and bitterness, and hate. The Church occupies the unenviable position of being the opposer of the interests of religion for the sake of maintaining its own miserable rule; for, by this time, the Church has arrived at that saddest of all delusions, the believing that its own existence, and the continuance

of piety, religion, and truth, in the world, are inevitably united. Soon the world gathers the fruits of this. Persecution by sword and fire are waged by the dominant party to suppress the manifestation of a fuller spiritual development; and speedily follow all the evils which seem the inevitable arrangement of man's attempts to restore the soul from priestly thralldom, and hierarchal tyranny. It is this fatal error which makes ecclesiastical history such a fearful record. The wars called religious have originated in this. We doubt not that, in most cases, the men who originated and carried them out believed that they were doing God service. Yet were they mere battles for church dominance and corporative aggrandisement; though to these immediate objects was joined the belief that on the triumph of the one party depended the triumph of God's eternal truth, and on the triumph of the other the utter debasement if not destruction thereof. For hence resulted the extreme fierceness with which ecclesiastical wars were waged, and the cruelty which characterized them. "Turn," says Robert Hall, "turn a Christian society into an Established Church, and it is no longer a voluntary assembly for the worship of God; it is a powerful corporation, full of such sentiments and passions as usually distinguish those bodies; a dread of innovation, an attachment to abuses, a propensity to tyranny and oppression. Hence the convulsions that accompany religious reform, where the truth of the opinions in question is better

regarded, amidst the alarm that is felt for the splendour, opulence, and power which they are the means of supporting. To this alliance of Christianity with civil power, it is owing that ecclesiastical history presents a chaos of crimes; and that the progress of religious opinions which, left to itself, had been calm and silent, may be traced in blood."*

Now what *à priori* reasoning would conclude, the experience of history confirms. Through all the progress of the Christian religion such has attended the course of Church establishments. Rome is not alone in this respect. Geneva, Germany, England, all afford overwhelming evidence of the facts. The Albigensian persecutions have found their many imitators. Scotland's covenanters show that we need not go to Rome for the spirit. All history tells us that it is a constant accompaniment of law-established churches. In England and other free countries the spirit has found little room to display itself. Let it not therefore be supposed that it has died out from amongst us. We no longer have Smithfield fires and Coventry stakes. The age forbids persecution taking this manly mode of exhibiting its zeal for God. But the spirit which lit the pyre, and raised the stake, is still active and vital. This animus of church establishments will only die out with the institution. If the law, and the voice of the nation, of which the law is but a declaration, forbid such displays, as were in the good old times

* Robert Hall's *Apology for the Freedom of the Press*.

tolerated, it still makes for itself some place of action, some little field on which to exercise itself; and what once burnt now inflicts a church rate on an opposing dissenter; what once racked, tortured, and incarcerated, now refuses to open sacred ground in which to bury the unorthodox dead. To such wretched resources is this spirit driven, in order to display itself in the present day. Yet display itself it does. We might pursue this examination through many more details. It could easily be shown how a church becomes the instrument of the State. What ready tools the lawned gentlemen have ever been to carry out the tyrannous purposes of the most tyrannous government! History is full of examples. Who ever looks at the bench of bishops to countenance any enlightened movement? Who always most strenuously oppose the imparting knowledge to the people, except through their own crucible? Who are renowned for being the most indefatigable antagonists of all political, social, or religious reforms, even in cases of long-acknowledged abuses? To such questions one answer must ever be given. Every voice of this multitudinous nation would unite in giving the clerical hierarchy in answer. Such a charge, and so sanctioned, cannot be without foundation. It now stands before us a living reality; it lies in the history of the past, a venerable and antiquated fact. Church establishments are, and ever have been, one of the greatest hindrances to the founding of Christ's kingdom on the earth*.

* To those who desire to pursue this subject, we cannot do better than recommend Mr. Miall's new work, "The British Churches in

But it may be said—Granted all this, in what way can church establishments be considered as a cause of unbelief? We shall see.

It may be laid down as a rule, that all which opposes the full development of the spirit of inquiry which God has implanted in man, is not only injurious to spiritual progress, but serves to excite inquiry as to how and by what means such presumptuous encroachment, by external authority upon the conscience, may be weakened and destroyed. In proportion to the strength of resistance will be the force of reaction. If man cannot satisfy the longings of his soul in respect to religious matters, his energy will take an opposite course; and he who began by doubting the right of an established clerical hierarchy to define *à priori* what he shall believe, and accept as pure divine truth, will very often, through the bitterness of controversy, and the total disrespect paid to moral, not to say anything of religious, control, by the accredited authority, end in being opposed to religion itself. Thousands in England, at the present time, are living illustrations of the fact that such is the case. The spirit will not be bound. In some mode or other it will assert its freedom. Prevent it doing so, religiously, then it will assert its high prerogative in freeing itself from all religious control whatever. All attempts to effect such an unholy purpose have reacted upon the cause which the authorities profess, and in many

relation to the British People;" a work of piety, earnestness, and liberality; one calculated to effect much good for the religion of this country.

cases, have at heart. This is necessarily the course of church establishments. They have a creed to defend; power to maintain; wealth to preserve; emolumentary offices to dispense: the whole system of such corporations is opposed to the allowance of free inquiry, and religious freedom. What reason would conclude, experience proves. In all countries they have, in one way or other, been one of the most active causes, why men have denied religious control; have become alienated from the church; and exercised their zeal, energy, and talent, in exposing what are often called the weak points of religion; in a word, disbelieving themselves, and labouring to make the world disbelieve with them. If the natural right of the soul cannot be asserted in connection with faith, it will assert itself against faith. If the channel allowed for spiritual water to flow through be not wide enough, then will it scoop out for itself a wider. This, we are convinced, is one of the reasons why so many have opposed religion. Given, the soul with her aspirations, God-endowed desire to rise and soar, and an established church with its narrow restrictions, its soul-limitations, its ligaments and bonds, and what must be the consequence? A reaction which shall tell not only against the proximate restraining powers, but against the authority from whom they profess to derive, and in whose name they exercise, their restrictive influence. This cause is perhaps much much more injurious to the great body of the people, than to the intelligent and thoughtful few. The

toiling and industrious have but few opportunities and little leisure to separate the purity of the doctrine from the abuse of its professors, but their natural quick-sightedness soon detects the fact, that if the doctrine be true, church establishments in their present condition must be false; but if, as the law-appointed preachers of the Gospel declare, the one is essential to the right reception of the other, then the people reject both. To a great extent such they have done at the present time. The strange anomalies which such a state of things necessitates are open to the least observant. The readiness with which the hierarchy professes its willingness to suffer martyrdom in support of purity of faith, and orthodoxy of doctrine, when either are said to be threatened, and the cowardice which it displays at the moment of action, have won for it the well-merited contempt of the majority of the British people. "We declare this is wrong in the sight of God; heresy is on the face of it; it is antagonistic to the pure faith of Jesus Christ; we, the appointed guardians of religion, declare it to be irreligious!" exclaim the potentates and doctors of the establishment. "Well be it so" reply the ministers of the temporal power, "that is not our concern; you are our servants and must obey our commands; we decree that a man holding the opinions which you declare heretical, irreligious, and undoctinal, may be in the church, receive its pay, and eat its rations." Do those who believe that the doctrines they condemned were pernicious and heretical, leave a church

thus rendered unholy, and unchristian? Nothing of the sort. Having drawn up a protest and got it well published, they silently pursue their accustomed course, still form part of a body so contaminated and sullied, and still receive the wages of sin, and eat the bread of iniquity. Can such things, which are now of constant occurrence in our Church, fail to injure the religious life of a land, and increase the number of its disbelievers? Such it has done; and such, with accelerated steps, will it continue to do so long as the evil exists.

But even deeper than this is the injurious effect of the union of Church and State. It not only increases the indifference of a country, but it renders what religion there is of a weak and conventional character. The majority of its members will be mere conformists, for the sake of advantages which result from such conformity. We shall always find thousands ready to put on the appearances and outward dress of religion when it is called respectable to do so, and when such conduct helps to fill the pocket and improve the prospects of its professors. Religion thus pursued, considered as a means of worldly improvement and advancement, will ever be marked by a coldness of heart, and a frigidness of exterior, repulsive, revolting, and deadening: zeal will be ignored; enthusiasm forbidden; energy and warmth of feeling considered as fanaticism; and every attempt to infuse new life and vigour into the effete and worn-out body, will be met with abuse, opposition, and

condemnation. Under such a state, the "Christianity of the street" will be the Christianity of the Church; instead of the Christianity of God being the Christianity of the world*. A moral torpor will characterize the Church and its movements; a consciousness of real weakness amidst apparent strength will destroy its influence. The spirit of the world will consume the Church, instead of the Church consuming, or subordinating the spirit of the world. Every way is this evident at the present time. The power most hostile to the full development of a Christian life is the Church as by act of Parliament established. Its different orders, offices, and emoluments, which continually act as bribes to allure men from the truth, are all hostile to a true Christian ideal. A formula of thirty-nine, or any other number of Articles, which all who become its members avowedly or tacitly promise to believe and uphold, is in all respects inimical to the freedom of the Gospel. With such an *à priori* formula to defend, and the Scriptures to use as the instrument, the Holy Word ceases to be even a "living soul," much less a "quickenings spirit." Souls are thus prevented from seeking after "the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." The growth of a vital spiritual belief is retarded. Religion becomes an institution, a profession, a trade, and a calling; instead of an ever-living influence, a reality, a

* Theodore Parker.

function, and a duty; a mere marketable commodity, instead of a relation between God and man not to be purchased "by gold, by much fine gold."

Tried in every way by its own standard, an establishment would be found wanting. Measured by its own ideal, it would be found altogether below the one assumed. Judged by its effect, it must be condemned as an institution injurious to the religious life of a country, and opposed to the realization of an active and benevolent piety. Taken upon its own especial reasons for being, it can in nowise be tolerated; for they are without any foundation in the reality of life. Its pleas that it fosters and preserves a religious feeling, and keeps up a unity of faith, are utterly untenable. Of the religious communities now in England, the least renowned for its active and zealous Christianity is the Church of England, as it is somewhat presumptuously called; while for unity, within its pale exists every known form of difference of interpretation. The opposition it ever presents to social and political reforms, to the cleansing the land of abuses, has entirely alienated from it the hearts of the people; and the wonder is that it is so lost to the sense of shame, as to dare to call itself the poor man's Church. In every way is its claim to honour and love, and esteem, vain, unmerited, and unaccepted. Its worldliness, its love of ease, its want of heart, its frigid respectability, and its preference for the things of this world, rather than the things of heaven, have brought it to its present low, but

well-merited condition. The indifference to, and neglect of religious subjects which this has produced can scarcely be estimated. Certain we are, that not a little of the practical infidelity of the age must be laid to the charge of Church establishments.

The contents of the present chapter may be briefly summed up, and the results arrived at clearly stated, in a few sentences. The claim of an establishment is in the first place, that, without such a guardian, religion would die out of the world, or at least be most fearfully corrupted. To this assertion experience is directly opposed. The accredited priests of all ages, though they could not, from the nature of man, have been the inventors of religion, have always been its chief corrupters. A church when sanctioned and supported by the State, becomes a corporation, having separate interests and distinct prerogatives. These need the preservation of a separate and superior order for their defence. Hence the origin of clergy and laity. This division is speedily followed by the doctrine that the existence of such a body, with such immunities and privileges, is essential for the existence of religion itself. Hence attempt to weaken the clerical or priestly power is looked upon as an attack upon religion. Persecution, with its awful accompaniments, is the consequence of such an error being received. History shows this to be a characteristic common to all such establishments, and not peculiar to any one. From their very nature, they are

opposed to free inquiry, and the spread of education, which would weaken their influence and destroy their power. All abuses thus become sacred in their sight; to touch them is to lay an unhallowed finger upon the holy things of God. As instruments of state policy they are necessitated to weaken their influence still further by being subordinate to their paymasters, and to sell the eternal truth "for a mess of pottage." They are hostile to the growth of spiritual and political freedom, and the hierarchy of a church are ever found amongst the bitterest and most zealous opponents of all reform, even after the abuse has been long acknowledged, and the necessity of its removal allowed. But finally, and more injuriously still, religion under such auspices has become a marketable commodity, to be bid for, and, for all the worldly advantages attending it, to be obtained, like other merchandize, for money. The effects of such a system have been, a contempt for the Church, and a repugnance for religion itself, which has ended in producing indifference, recklessness, and infidelity. Few enemies have been more injuriously potent to religion than Church establishments*.

* "Here I am led to avow that the churches of England, and that decorous part of society to which they set the tone, appear to take a less true and less Christian view of the relative enormity of sins than the common heart of the world takes. The world broadly distinguishes sins of selfishness and malignity as unbearable, and imposes on them many opprobrious epithets—mean, sneaking, rascally, &c.; and these are precisely the sins which of all indicate that a man has no stamp of the Infinite Spirit upon him. But sins of pas-

sion—not so indulged as to injure or betray others—the world treats very mildly; and these, though of course implying the temporary conquest of the soul by baser impulses, yet by no means denote the total absence of God's Spirit, if the sins have been unpremeditated, or the passion violent. Mean and griping conduct, especially if habitual, is a far worse spiritual sin than a bout of drunkenness; yet a church will animadvert on the latter and dares not touch the former—probably because it is forced, like the law of the land, to act by rules capable of strict definition. Thus we get the astonishing result, that while the church (in its treatment of transgressors) typifies the law, the world comes nearer to the Gospel! As the publicans and harlots were nearer to the kingdom of God than the Pharisees, so were Byron and Shelley than many a punctual reciter of creeds; and this the world well knows, but the churches have no mouth to declare. Out of the above grow moral difficulties concerning all church discipline whatever, which, I confess, now seem to me of a most unmanageable kind.”—*The Soul, her Sorrows and Aspirations*, chap. ii. p. 113. 2nd edition.

CHAPTER IV.

SECTARIANISM.

It is curious to note how, under different forms and manifestations, ages repeat themselves. The history of the Church, after it became a patronized and respectable institution, is that of the divisions of the Church. The heresies are the prototypes of sects. We have merely changed the name, not the thing. Never were they more abundant than at the comparatively early epoch of the third, fourth, and fifth centuries. Before the great separation of the Eastern from the Western Church, and long after, the greatest cause of discord among Christians was what it now is, the insane attempt to obtain an impossibility—unity of opinion. The following passage from Hilary might have been written to-day:—"It is a thing equally deplorable and dangerous, that there are as many creeds as opinions among men, as many doctrines as inclinations, and as many sources of blasphemy as there are faults among us, because we make creeds arbitrarily, and explain them as arbitrarily. The Homoiousian is rejected, received, and explained away by successive synods. The partial or total resemblance of the Father and of the Son is a subject of dispute for these unhappy times. Every

year, nay, every moon, we make new creeds to describe invisible mysteries. We repent of what we have done, we defend those who repent, we anathematize those whom we have defended. We condemn either the doctrine of others in ourselves, or our own in that of others; and reciprocally tearing one another to pieces, we have been the cause of each other's ruin."* Such is, at present, the condition of the religious world. Difference of opinion itself does not constitute sectarianism. The one is always to be desired, the other deprecated. Uniformity of belief is a thing not to be proud of, even if it were possible to be realized. No two men ever look upon the same object from exactly the same point of view; hence, no object can appear to any two men exactly the same. Education, the pursuits of life, early associations and friendships, prejudgments and interest, all have their share in producing a modification in our acceptance of any given truth. Even as respects God, every one who thinks at all will have some slight shade of difference in his idea of the Ruler and Creator. Revelation can in no wise remove this difference, for Revelation itself shares in the same law, and is individually interpreted. This difference, under proper control, would give healthiness and earnestness to religious life, did we not fall into the error of considering that our interpretation was the only correct one, and that all others were erroneous. This fatal

* Hilary; as quoted by Gibbon.

mistake has been productive of the saddest results. The belief that our view of the truth was essential to salvation has given rise to bitterness, discord, and strife, where all should be harmony and peace. It is this which degrades difference of opinion into sectarianism. We should court this difference, welcome it with kindness, well knowing that nothing but truth can ultimately triumph. A nation has health and vitality when it can glory in the freedom of mind which exercises and allows without let or hindrance others to exercise this generous and noble liberty. But sad is the condition when each member of the State makes his own little belief the standard of orthodoxy, and brands as infidel and unbeliever all who differ from the articles of his creed. Yet such, to a great extent, is the present condition of England. Emulation is the great characteristic of her religious life; not the glorious emulation of the Christian, which sacrifices self for the good of man, but the emulation of boasting how many more proselytes we have made than the rival sect over the way; how many more churches we support, and how many more missionaries we send out; and how many more Bibles we circulate. Such is the worldly spirit which animates the soul of sectarianism, nay, is the necessary accompaniment of its existence. We would rather man remained unconverted, than be drawn over to the enemy. Better he serve in the army of the devil, than not serve in ours. Such, if not the language, is at least the practice of sectarianism.

Every day affords additional evidence of this. Chapels erected, not because they were needed, but because one of another denomination was built in the village; and are we to be outdone by the opposing sect? Immediately a chapel is erected, and the division grows wider and deeper between the contending parties, while the people look on in quiet indifference or inward joy. This is an oft-repeated matter; and every time with deeper injury to religion. The aspect it presents is little likely to convert the ignorant and the sinful. Each sect striving to be first to seize upon the yet unreclaimed, and declaring, not the positive beauty of holiness, but the superiority of its own particular kind, has little that is attractive, little that can influence a mind which has long looked upon such conduct in the light of amusement, rather than with the serious desire to ascertain on which side is displayed the spirit of truth.

Measured by the Gospel, which all sects profess to follow, what a discrepancy exists! The command of the Apostle is that the followers of Christ "love one another." The sign given by the teacher by which the world may know Christians, is that "they love one another." The spirit of the Gospel is love; of sectarianism, discord. Some doctrinal point of little or no import; some metaphysical distinction, which can never be explained nor understood, and which would be worth nothing if it could be, are the grounds of severance, disunion, and enmity. Whichever sect may commence a work of love and

Christian charity, it is sure to be met with opposition, questionings of motives, and assumptions of evil intentions by the rival sect. Instead of co-operation for the furtherance of the design, everything is done which may by any possibility weaken the extra influence such operations were calculated to obtain for their projectors and their cause; a rival one is established, and energies which, combined, might have affected much and permanent good, are frittered away in idle dispute and unchristian wrangling. Truly the harvest is great, and the labourers but few. Everywhere is strife and discord weakening the religious influence of the churches, and increasing the number of those who refuse to acknowledge their spiritual truth. The continual controversies and miserable conduct of the shepherds have scattered the flocks; and no power of theirs can ever recall the wanderers back. It would seem as if the denunciation of Ezekiel had been uttered against them. No words could express so powerfully the cause, the effect, and the consequence, as those of the Prophet. The religious world should meditate much upon their significance, and especially their application to the present state of things spiritual in England. "Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was

broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost ; but with force and cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd : and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains and upon every high hill : yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them. Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord ; As I live, saith the Lord God, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock ; therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord ; thus saith the Lord God ; Behold, I am against the shepherds ; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock ; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more, for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them.”* Such, almost to the letter, is the condition of the people under the guidance of our religious sects ; and yet they exclaim with wonder, “ Why doth the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing ? ” Can the churches be expected to hold the heart of the nation ? False to their ideal ; false to the spirit of their Master ; full of mammon-worship, and respect of persons ; abounding with strife, conten-

* Ezekiel xxxiv. 2 to 10 inclusive.

tion, and feuds; cleaving to the letter which killeth, and forsaking the spirit which maketh alive, can we be surprised at their weakness, their want of success, and the little influence they exercise for good in the life of the people? With the spirit of sectarianism dominant, religion must inevitably be in a weak and still weakening condition. Its attraction has ceased, and its glory become dim. He who gave his life for all, and came to seek and to save, has been made the partizan of a sect, and the teacher of a dogma. Were it not so, there is machinery enough in operation in England alone to convert the world. Yet day by day is the influence becoming less; and day by day are the ministers of religion more and more becoming a by-word and a mockery. The cry of the people is, Settle your own differences, and then we may listen to your discourses of peace, of brotherhood, and love.

But not only in religious matters has the spirit of sectarianism exercised a baneful influence. In this respect, it has had a direct and an indirect effect. From the Church it has entered the world, and thence reacted upon religion. Take the case as regards education. Here is a people ignorant, yet yearning after knowledge.—“As the hart panteth after the water-brooks,” so are the majority of the working classes longing for education—longing for it for themselves and their children. Here one would suppose were a common ground on which all Christians might unite. It is not so. The people may go down to death untaught, ignorant, and de-

based, rather than receive education from any party to whose creed they have not subscribed. Thus, the establishment puts in her claims to be the educator of youth; the dissenter repudiates it, not from a liberal policy, but because his view of the truth is not the one the churchman would inculcate; the voluntarist, again, disclaims the right or duty of the State to find education for its people: and thus, from the impossibility of reconciling such adverse pretensions, the people cry in vain for mental food, for which they hunger with an unabating appetite. Need we be surprised at the conclusion drawn from such proceedings? Need it be a matter for wonder, that the people declare the ministers opposed to the spread of knowledge, because it would destroy all their pretensions and liberate the world from their rule? Carrying this a step farther, what more natural than that the faith should be made responsible for the conduct of its professors, and be in its turn neglected, forgotten, or openly disbelieved? When the teachers of religion so far forget the spirit of the faith they endeavour to inculcate, as to bicker and quarrel amongst themselves as to the interpretation of what they declare the essential of salvation; when they manifest in their controversies all the virulence and malignity of partizans; when, upon a scarcely perceptible difference of discipline, they divide and subdivide, and in language of abuse and acrimony, declare their superiority to the old mode; when a Greek verb variously translated causes quarrels and feuds; when these, divided upon all other

points, unite to oppose the secular education of the people, to resist every attempt made to obtain social or political reforms ; when these things are done, and in the name of that religion which has for its very base peace and love, for its end the perfection of man, which cries in every passage love one another, which even urges the world to strive after knowledge and truth ; then the present condition of the religious life of Europe is easily accounted for, and its causes readily discovered. Where example and precept differ, where the spoken word and the acted life have no agreement, we could have no difficulty in declaring what would be the result. The very falseness of the religious would generate an opposite truthfulness in their opponents. Thus it is. The want of sincerity in the life and deeds of the professing Christians of England has caused men not only to disbelieve, but to find reasons for comfort and gratulation in that disbelief. No state of things can be imagined more sad than this. Those who should be the salt of the earth have lost their savour. A practical infidelity is everywhere rife amongst us, which, in its effects, is far more injurious and deadly than any theoretical infidelity can, from its very nature, possibly be. How few think of the awfulness of the words, I believe ! No one amongst us, like Faust, asks in agony, Who dares say I believe in God ? A lip worship, which but seldom moves the heart, and outward conformity, correct as regards the decencies of life, the little moralities of social law, but oh, how wanting in the fine spirit of Chris-

tian godliness, which sacrifices all, sect, interest, self, for the realization of Christ's kingdom in the soul! Sectarianism, that spirit which demands for itself the right to differ from others in opinion, but less than the Pope tolerates difference from its own little standard, has taken entire possession of the churches. Protestantism, false to its own primal assertion of the right of private judgment, has, in its various divisions, set up so many little infallibilities, far more tyrannic, far more injurious, than the great infallibility against which they all fulminate as the anti-Christ; forgetful that the spirit which prompts such tirades is anti-Christian itself; forgetful that such conduct is more fatal to religion than the power they so much decry, and whose influence they groundlessly hold in such dread. In every part of life is sectarianism spreading its baneful roots. Instead of fostering, it checks and retards free inquiry. For one mighty eagle opposing its course, there are now a thousand night birds doing dolorous music over its progress. Each sect, with its own little claim for possessing a clearer insight into the truth, deems every attempt to press a little farther, and see a little more, or at least, to see what we do for ourselves, impiety, and opposes it with rebuke, abuse, and defamation. To all who watch the course of things, there need no more be said to prove the assertion.

We might pursue the same course in respect to sectarianism which we have done with church establishments. Both kinds of arguments apply with equal force in both cases. It would be but to

tread over the same ground again. This would prove wearisome. The facts are too potent to need much lengthened demonstration of their existence. The malign effects of party spirit have long been felt, and too often deplored by the wisest and most devout, to need a very large space being occupied in their re-assertion here. To trace it in all its bearings, to pursue it through all its ramifications, and to dilate at large upon the results, would require a volume of no small dimensions. It is every day tending more and more to injure the religious life of our country, and to increase that infidelity against which it so eloquently and lugubriously complains. Bibliolatry has, on the one side, received its greatest advocates and propagandists; while, on the other, nothing has tended so much to weaken the effects of that wondrous Book on the minds and lives of thousands. Each party claiming to draw its belief, its forms, and its doctrines from the Bible; each drawing texts therefrom to establish its own peculiar tenets; has converted the life-inspiring Book into a divinity too sacred to be touched; or a dusty assemblage of texts for supporting its own views, and establishing its own creed. The practical results of such proceedings have been most disastrous. Nothing is now more common than the exclamation, "You can prove anything from the Bible!" Men not otherwise irreverent have become weary of this continual charging and countercharging from the same source, and turned with disgust from what would else have been their

deepest joy, their richest hope, and greatest consolation. The continual strife, bickering, and mutual ill-will generated by this constant endeavour to proselytize which distinguishes the sects, have produced their natural consequences—a people either opposed, or, which is still worse, indifferent, and a bigotry and fanaticism as totally different from true Christianity as midday is from midnight. The mistake which sectarianism has committed of making opinion the standard of piety has been most fatal. Every nonconformist has set up an orthodoxy the departure from which is deemed damnation; and while the dissentients are quarrelling over the disputed point, thousands go down to death, uninfluenced by the genial and soul-preserving spirit of religion. This is an occurrence so common that, like the rising of the sun, we cease to be astonished at the fact. The closeness of the evil and its daily repetition have, in some measure, destroyed the sense of perception as to its magnitude and injurious potency. We have looked at it so long as to be familiar with it, and to consider it a necessary ill; not as the excrescence of a corrupting offshoot of the Tree of Life. By sectarianism the unitive faith of Christianity has been reduced to a “thing of shreds and patches;” its charity has been destroyed; its holiness stained; its purity spotted; its love abnegated; its whole meaning misinterpreted; its tendency misdirected; and final triumph materially retarded. The good works, and they are many, which have been done by the various religious bodies, have been done not

through, but in spite of the sectarianism which marked their course. None can be more willing to acknowledge, more grateful for, the glorious works of Christian benevolence which owe their origin to the faith, and their execution to the Dissenters, than myself. But these only serve to convince me more and more of the deep vitalism of the religion itself which, under such a spirit, could produce such manifestations. Had it not been for the ever-living truth of Christ, his teachings must inevitably have sunk under the load of rubbish which has been heaped around them. Looking at what, under such circumstances, it has accomplished, we cannot but be grieved at the thought of what might have been, if its own pure spirit had been left to pursue its own course in the earth. Certainly, it has had no greater obstructor, no more potent opposer, than sectarianism. We know of no sight so sad, as the condition of the religious world in England at the present time.

Perhaps none of the causes given will excite more surprise than the present. England is wont to pride herself upon enjoying the privilege of thinking for herself in matters pertaining to religion; and to this is usually ascribed the superior healthiness of our religious life, when compared with nations not similarly situated. This is one of the chief causes given why our charities are so numerous, why so much holy work is even now done in England, and why we are at present exempt from the disasters which rend so many neighbouring lands. We have little cause to pride ourselves

in this. It is the work of our forefathers, and we do little to extend or make it perpetual. They had a faith to establish, we a sect to render dominant. They were absorbed by the glorious ideas of liberty in its noblest acceptation—liberty of thought, of speech, and conscience. For this they fought, suffered, and died. We, with the same holy war-cries, struggle for the triumph of some trumpery temporal institution, and unite the progress of the denomination with the progress of religion. The rise or decadence of the one is measured by the increase or decrease of the other. The sects look around them, and see their votaries depart, and their influence grow “small by degrees and beautifully less;” then the land echoes with Jeremiads and lamentations about the course of scepticism, free-thinking, and infidelity. All such cries betoken a faithlessness in their utterer, a secret, it may be unknown, consciousness of a weakness somewhere. Did they believe the truth they teach, then these things would cease. Can falsehood be stronger than truth? Is God less potent than the Devil? Yet to hear what we are necessitated to hear daily, one would suppose this was the fact. What does all this outcry prove? Sectarianism has mistaken its own glory for the extension of the kingdom of God; and every retardation of their own onward movement is complained of as the increase of the power of Belial, and the succumbing of the cause of Christ to the interests of the world. The controversies now agitating this country are

sad proofs of all our changes, and utterly prevent anything we have said from being open to the charge of severity, partiality, or prejudice. Look at the Church with its Gorham case*. Look at

* "The judgment of the Queen's counsel is well enough for the nonce, but all the world perceives that it is a juggle, alike disgraceful to the Church that must brook it, and to the head of the Church that was obliged to give it. They could not heal the wound, and durst not probe it, so they skimmed it over for a season."—British Quarterly Review.

"We see in the English Church, I will not merely say no descent from the first ages, and no relationship to the Church in other lands, but we see no body politic of any kind; we see nothing more or less than an establishment—a department of government, or a function or operation of the State,—without a substance—a mere collection of officials, depending on and living on the supreme civil power. Its unity and personality are gone, and with them its power of exciting feelings of any kind. It is easier to love or hate an abstraction than so tangible a frame-work or machinery. We regard it neither with anger nor aversion, nor with contempt, any more than with respect or interest. It is but one aspect of the State, or mode of civil governance. It is responsible for nothing; it can appropriate neither praise nor blame; but whatever feeling it raises is, by the nature of the case, to be referred on to the supreme power whom it represents, and whose will is its breath. And hence it has no identity of existence in distinct periods, unless the present legislature or court can affect to be the offspring and disciple of its predecessor. Nor can it, in consequence, be said to have any antecedents, or any future; or to live, except in the passing moment. As a thing without a soul, it does not contemplate itself, define its intrinsic constitution, or ascertain its position. It has no traditions; it cannot be said to think; it does not know what it holds and what it does not; it is not even conscious of its own existence. It has no love for its members, or what are sometimes called its children, nor any instinct whatever, unless attachment to its master or love of its place may be so called. Its fruits, as far as they are good, are to be made much of while they are present; for they are transient,

Weasleyanism, with its Conference ejections and its land-wide meetings, which in Chartists would have met with crown prosecutions. Look at the professedly religious press, and read the articles written by these "men of God." No Billingsgate can surpass the language used, for coarseness, abuse, and defamation. Did we not loathe the pursuit, we could furnish a volume of extracts of a character disgraceful even to a political partizan on the eve of an election, much less organs which have for their avowed object the hastening of the reign of the Prince of Peace. But we quit this subject, conscious that to every earnest, thoughtful heart, the contemplations of such scenes must be melancholy in the extreme; and no argument would be required to convince him how injurious such proceedings must be to the winning the hearts of the people from their present state of indifference and direct antagonism to religious influence. Sectarianism must ever be a potent cause of infidelity.

and without succession; its former champions of orthodoxy are not earnest of orthodoxy now; they died, and there was no reason why they should be reproduced. Bishop is not like bishop, more than king is like king, or ministry like ministry; its prayer-book is an act of Parliament of two centuries ago, and its cathedrals and its chapter-houses are the spoils of Catholicism."—Lectures on certain difficulties felt by Anglicans in submitting to the Catholic Church, by J. H. Newman, Lecture i. pp. 7-8.

CHAPTER V.

THE ANTAGONISM WHICH THE PROFESSORS OF RELIGION HAVE EVER OFFERED TO PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE.

THE lines which separate philosophy from science are clear and distinct. We have classed them together here for convenience, and because they have been the common ground of mistaken religious antagonism. From the beginning of history this warfare has waged. In Greece it existed, and Rome enjoyed its presence. But in no case has it raged so fiercely, so destructively, as under the Christian dispensation. This has been especially injurious to the spread of the faith. The failing to see that there must be union in all that proceeds from God, has been calamitous in the extreme. The desire to learn from the Bible what it was never intended to teach, has been productive of results most inimical to religion. The opposition given to scientific inquiries and philosophic pursuits by the churches, has generated an antagonism in philosophers and men of science, which has done not a little to weaken the hold of religion on the minds of the people. Persecution always destroys itself; but it does more—it destroys the cause in whose name it carried on persecution. If a Roger Bacon, a Campanella, a Galileo, are imprisoned, slain, and made

to take false oaths for the glory of God, and the good of religion, the reaction is certain. If God's glory require that men walk the earth with closed eyes and refuse the evidence of the senses, then God's glory must look to itself. No matter what the result, it still turns. Here is a fact demonstrable by a thousand proofs; if you, the interpreters of Revelation, cannot reconcile the fact with the Word, on you rests the consequence. God cannot lie. He made the world with all its phenomena. We but read the ever open book. What is there we unfold. The world will turn, though all the divines on earth declare it cannot. Unnumbered myriads of years have passed in the earth's formation, though all united priestdom declare it to be a work of only six days. There are the evidences before us, palpable, tangible, and, oh, how legible! The attempt to render them of none effect, or the more bold and open denial, are alike vain. To appeal to passion or prejudice, or what is still worse, the arm of power, is one of the greatest falsehoods to truth. All things coming from God are truthful and divine. To strive to make facts conform to an ever-changing standard of orthodoxy, or else to repudiate the facts, must in time produce disgust, contempt, and open or secret disbelief in a revealed religion, whose fundamental teachings are said to be diametrically opposed to the fact discovered. In no case could such a course act otherwise than injuriously. Is not this the chief cause why so many scientific men,

both in our own country and others, have been open to the charge of disbelief? Are not the false interpreters of a Divine Book responsible here? Man cannot close his eyes to evidences so easily accumulated and clearly demonstrated. To do so were an infidelity of the archest kind. Really and truly there can be no war between science and faith. Where it exists we may be sure there is error and wrong on one side or the other. On whichever side this may be, religion must temporally suffer; the number of disbelievers will increase while its teachers assert that unless discoveries can be made conformable to their interpretation of how things should be, they are irreligious and godless. Can there be a moment's doubt but that a geologist will adhere to the evidence which the earth's strata affords of the many changes she has undergone;—the many revolutions suffered;—and the immense numbers of cycles required to attain her present condition? Should the theologian assert, as he does, that it cannot be, for then the Mosaic account ceases to be true, what will be the consequence? The scientific teacher must perforce, if such be the alternative, reject the literal reading of Moses, and become, according to the divine, an infidel. The breach, once begun, continues to widen. Not only old Rome has persecuted her Campanellas and her Galileos. Witness the outcry raised a few years since, and even now heard in the land, against the impiety, wickedness, and infidelity of geology. No ancient defender of the Ptolemaic astronomy ever displayed more fierceness, or waxed

more wrath, against a teacher of the Copernican system, than these teachers of Christianity have manifested against the professors of the new science. They have boldly declared that Revelation and geology cannot be both true. There is an irreconcilable disagreement between them. What follows? Science cannot retract. To do so were to blaspheme. Its faith is based on eternal truth. To endeavour to make it square with any pre-announced credence would be altogether unworthy of any searcher after truth, and an utter prostitution of those faculties for whose right use man is responsible to God. Here there has been for years internecine war. No one unaccustomed to examine such questions can imagine the consequences resulting from such conduct. God's Word must substantiate God's work. They are parts of one great whole. Contradiction cannot exist. They are mutually dependent; and complement each other. A war between them must be injurious to the least sensibly demonstrative. Such has been the result of this unnatural and impious controversy. The proofs of science are evident to the senses. They more forcibly reach the convictions of men unaccustomed to metaphysical inquiries, who are the great majority; and who, while they *see* the force of a material fact, are too often unable to follow the argument which deduces the truth of a spiritual proposition. To such men the declaration of irreconcilability between religion, or rather Revelation, and science, must end in the weakening of the less palpable, though perhaps infinitely the

most important subject. The same may be said of philosophy, though the result has been less apparent. It is true that the mass of the people never philosophize. They accept, rather than arrive at conclusions. There are traditionary infidels as well as traditionary believers. After deep thought and much labour, the original promulgator of a doctrine has arrived at his conclusion. It descends to the people as a thing proved, and is received in its entirety, without going through the demonstration step by step. The history of any and every idea is a testimony in our favour. First, the property of one, then of a few, it at last becomes the accepted traditionary property of a nation. Philosophical teachings have been amenable to the same law, and have proceeded in the same course. Here the theological antagonism has had the same effect, as in the case of science. The Bible is not, and was never intended for, a book of philosophy. It has no system to propound. It never descends to analyze the faculties of man, to give the cause of every effect, except the grand final cause—God. The attempt to reduce it to this has injured its proper acceptance. The endeavour to ignore every faculty but reverence has, in a great degree, turned reverence from its legitimate end. Man is endowed by the Creator, for wise purposes, with various faculties; not to use them, even were that possible, would be a grievous sin. This demand theologians have made. Philosophy has from very necessity repudiated their right to make such a demand. In this

respect philosophy has been right. To believe a thing, and not to utter it because of the consequences that may result therefrom, is a cowardice and a sin. It is our duty here, to say our belief earnestly, sincerely, and openly, to scatter our mental wealth with an ever open hand ; to plant our standard ; to sow our seed ; to breathe, and if necessary, to shout our truth ; to preach on the house-tops what we hear in the ear ; regardless of what may ensue. The highest example to which we can appeal, with the fore-knowledge, and complete consciousness of its effects, taught his truth, and left it to produce its own results. The priests and accredited teachers of the time foretold an age of atheism, of superstition, and crime ; it mattered not. The saying was said, the seed was sown ; chief priests, and scribes, and Pharisees, may rage their impotent wrath, the word will spread, the seed will grow ; and, though destruction and doom be the issue, truth must be triumphant, and the convictions of the soul find for themselves a form and utterance.

The history of philosophy is peculiarly illustrative of the mode in which the powers of mind have been too strong for all external bonds and ligatures. The Church in all ages has exercised every instrument it could command for the purpose of checking its progress, but in vain. Imprisonment, torture, death, have been her material appliances for crushing the development of the intellect. Spiritual weapons have not been neglected. Excommunica-

tion and infamy have been heaped upon all who dared to pass the Rubicon of canonical authority. "Bell, book, and candlestick" have been employed for like purpose. Every means that skill, cunning, and power could devise, have in turns been put into action, to force or terrify the daring assertor of the soul's freedom back to the Procrustean measure of an opposing clerical hierarchy. The soul has been victor. Still, despite the experience of the past,—the lessons it inculcates ; the invariableness of its teachings that like causes under every variety of manifestation have produced like effects ; the immutable laws it reveals by which man and his destiny are regulated and governed ; all seem to have been thrown away. Authority and power have ever repeated the old blunders. As temporal position has changed, the protestors against, have become advocates and practisers of, persecution. In one vicious circle they have proceeded. Weakness and toleration ; power and persecution ; such is the history of religious bodies throughout the world. To day, as in old time, it is the same. Religion is still, by its teachers, made the antagonist of philosophy and science. The consequence is, that philosophy and science, instead of being the handmaids of faith, are its careless and indifferent contemporaries ; too often its open and direct opposers. They have, perhaps, too rashly accepted the charge of their incompatibility with each other. In one great point they have a direct advantage,—the sublime manner in which, for the most part, they pursue their silent

course ; merely laying down their positive truths, rejecting the gauntlet of controversy with one simple but overwhelming answer to all the attacks made upon their discoveries, their effects, and motives. The blind man cured by Christ, no matter what the learned of the Sanhedrim might say to him, had but one answer ; of their reasonings he knew nothing, but this he knew ; that whereas he was blind, he then saw. So reply true science and philosophy. We cannot pause to inquire about and to settle your theological disagreements ; but whatever you may say about the impossibility of a thing being so, this we do know, spite of all contradiction, " the earth still moves ;" strata still contain evidence of the extreme antiquity of the earth ; chloroform does remove, or deaden pain ; and God has endowed man with different faculties for divine purposes ; and he is the great unbeliever who refuses to apply them in all their variety for the betterment of man. Such is at present the state of the controversy. Let us now see how it acts upon the religious life of the people.

The life of a people, its belief, its faith, its general characteristics, are the product of its thinkers and teachers. If there be unity among its great men, there will also be unity among the multitude. If controversy, fanaticism, doubt, and unbelief, are the prevailing conduct of the thinkers of a nation, the people will reciprocate the same, in a larger, more distinct, and more exaggerated manner than their teachers. Thus the controversial among them

are more ready to quarrel, and more dogmatic in their assertions; the fanatics are more narrow, more bigoted, and intolerant; the unbelievers are more wildly infidel, and more irrationally opposed to religion. It is a universal truth. The masses always reveal in their thinkings and actings the characteristics of their theologians, poets, philosophers, and teachers of science. We may judge of a people's teachers by the people themselves. The French have long been the product of Voltaire, Rousseau, and the Encyclopédists. The English owe their present somewhat superior piety to their Whitfields and Wesleys. They owe their irreligion to their Gibbons, their Humes, and their Owens. To the controversies among their theologians—to the war between religion and science, and philosophy—do they also owe much of their present indifference and antagonism to religious influences. This, without doubt, is one of the great causes why mankind are at present so dissatisfied with their religious institutions. There has long been a practical atheism in our public scientific lectures. God has been banished from the theatre. In learned phraseology have we striven to eject Him from his throne in the hearts of men. "Final Cause," the "Great First Cause," "The Universal Law," "Nature," and a thousand other fine, learned, and inexplicable phrases are resorted to for the purpose of avoiding the brave old word expressive of all these. The effect of this, in these days of educative progress, cannot well be portrayed. With this accounting for all things by laws well understood, and causes easily explained,

the need for a personal superintending power, the need of a God—to regulate the goings of the universe, has been superseded. From the readers of our popular scientific treatises, and the auditors of our popular scientific lecturers, these views have spread to the less intelligent portions of the people; for men, thank God, are always propagandists, whether they disbelieve or believe. It is now very far from uncommon to hear men who can neither read nor write, discourse eloquently upon the supererogation of wanting a god. “No man,” says one* who knows them well, “no man who does not go much amongst the people, can tell the extent to which infidelity, and even atheism, has spread amongst them.” Let not the religious say this is the natural result of science and philosophy. Nothing can be farther from the truth; the cause lies nearer home. Religious teachers themselves are more responsible than they seem to imagine, or are willing to allow. Their opposition to science has produced neglect on the part of her devotees. Men, whose souls have yearned to write holy on their labours, have been deterred by the unholy antagonism of the teachers of Christianity. The constant watchfulness lest a word should be uttered, or a discovery made, which might invalidate an accepted orthodoxy; the combined labours to suppress and retard the progress of opinion; the universal clamour raised by the guardians of faith against the unlucky soul, who in his search after truth has

* William Howitt.

been led to conclusions which the accredited authorities have refused to sanctify;—these, and other courses daily pursued by professors, have produced results which so many lament, and which have been the fruitful causes of many of the evils now so generally deplored. It is now no uncommon thing for a Christian minister to be charged with infidelity for endeavouring to unite science and faith; and for the scientific writer to be openly sneered at as striving to popularize himself by maintaining a “cant and creed” if he unite an earnest, reverential, and religious feeling with his teaching of natural truth. Too true amongst us are the mournful utterances of Thomas Carlyle: “The eternal sacredness of this universe itself, and of this human life itself, has fallen dark to the most of us.”

We cannot do better than conclude the present chapter by the following quotation from one who has been by one party often charged with “infidelity,” and by the other as preaching a “cant and a creed.” “The advocates of the inherent moral disorder of the world, however, will probably point to history and to the actual condition of the human race in every country of the globe, as affording demonstrative evidence that this supposed moral government is a dream. The past and present sufferings of mankind cannot be disputed; but I ask, in what age, and in what nation, have the religious instructors of the people been believers in an actual practical moral government of the world by God?

Where and when have they expounded the natural arrangements by means of which this government is accomplished? And when and where have they directed the religious sentiments of the people to reverence and obey the natural laws as the roads that lead to secular virtue and prosperity? Ever since the promulgation of Christianity, has any nation discovered, and practically fulfilled, the natural conditions by which the precepts of this religion are supported and enforced? Not one example is known of such conduct: need we, therefore, be surprised at the results being such as history discloses and we perceive? The evidence of past and present experience certainly demonstrates that mankind, by shutting their eyes to the order of Providence in the world, by trampling the dictates of morality and religion under foot, and by seeking prosperity and happiness under the guidance of their selfish animal propensities, have never realized the objects of their desires; but it does not prove that no scheme of moral government adapted to their nature exists. It shows that they have not discovered such a scheme; but neither had they discovered the steam-engine, railroads, nor the effects of sulphuric ether, until a very recent date. They have been, and generally speaking, continue to be, ignorant of their own nature,—of the adaptations of the external world to its constitution;—of the principles on which the order of nature is framed, and of their own capabilities of conforming to it, and hence many of their sufferings may be

accounted for ; but the requisite discoveries may be made, and indeed have been partially made, and all experience shows that human happiness has increased in proportion to obedience to the natural laws. The most intelligent, moral, and industrious nations are the most prosperous and happy ; the most ignorant, idle, self-seeking, turbulent, and aggressive, are the most miserable and poor. These undeniable facts afford strong indications that a moral government of the world by natural laws exists ; and if it does so, is not the discovery of its scheme an important study, claiming the serious attention of man ? I cannot too often repeat, that, unless the Christian morality be sustained and enforced by the order of nature, it is in vain to teach it as a rule of conduct in secular affairs."*

We have now, as impartially and as briefly as we possibly could, endeavoured to solve the most important question of the present time. To many, we doubt not, much that has been said will give pain ; but pain is far preferable to a life of unconscious error. Our search has been for truth, and we have unhesitatingly followed our subject wherever it might lead. The solutions usually given to this subject, have, after deep thought, and earnest meditation, appeared entirely untenable. The unsatisfactory results of previous inquiry into the matter, and the altogether inconclusive answers given to the question by the orthodox, led to a re-investigation

* George Combe : *Relation between Religion and Science*, pp. 33, 34.

of the whole subject. The fearful importance of its nature to the future destiny of man is a sufficient reason for the enquiry. If we have not attained to a complete mastery of the argument, we may, perhaps, have laid a stone for the foundation of some future building to be erected by a more skilful architect.

Let us now give an epitome of the conclusions to which our investigation has led us. The usual theory of human depravity, in nowise affords a sufficient cause for the effect. The subordinate causes, such as vice, ignorance, and pride, assist us but little in endeavouring to account for the existence of such a wide-spread disease. Thrown upon a different track, we found the great primal cause of infidelity was to be searched for in the falseness of a church to its ideal. This fundamental cause is powerfully aided by the secondary causes. Bibliolatry, which we defined as a subordination of the spirit—the ever-living spirit—of God, to the letter of the word; law-church establishments with their professed unity, but internal differences; sectarianism carefully distinguished from the healthy holding of diverse opinions under one common head, by its elevation of some doctrinal dogma, and making that the *sine quâ non* of a holy and devout life; and lastly, the antagonism religious teachers have ever displayed towards philosophy and science;—these combined causes, it appears to us, are sufficient to explain the existence of the giant evil which has done, and is still doing, so much to make our lives

the sad, sad things which in modern Europe they have become. The total disintegration of modern society; the awful discrepancies between rich and poor; the luxury and want, which riots and dies side by side, are totally irreconcilable with any deep religious feeling existing in the mass of the people, or of a practical holiness manifesting itself in the various relations men should hold one with another. In some form or other infidelity manifests its existence in every phase of society. There is no part in which it does not injuriously display itself. In the church, the shop, the mart, the direct principles of Christianity are practically ignored, and virtually repudiated. A low utilitarianism, a sad love of the creature comforts of life, a grievous mammon-worship, have entered our philosophy, our living, and our trade. We have forgotten the ever-living and ever-present God; have ceased to do our every act as beneath the "great Task Master's eye." The issue is what we have seen, and what, alas, we daily see. Holiness, purity, truth, are daily, hourly sacrificed at the earthly shrine of some poor temporal idol. "The eternal sacredness of this universe itself, and of this human life itself," is forgotten in the haste which is everywhere displayed; the hot restlessness, the feverish pulsations of modern life, are injurious to morals, and entirely opposed to the forbearance, loving-kindness, and brotherhood of the Christian faith. Any investigation into the causes which have produced such results, needs no apology, nor deprecatory explanations.

PART III.

RELIGIOUS SCEPTICISM; ITS CURE.

INTRODUCTION.

IT is now that we begin to feel more than ever the onerousness of the task we have undertaken. To detect evils is an easy thing, when they have become so palpable as those upon which we have dilated. To trace their causes is also a subject of comparative facility; but to propound remedies is an undertaking which often baffles the power of the most gifted. Happy shall we be, if anything said by us shall be found suggestive of means, whereby a more vital religious life may manifest itself in the hearts of the people.

In looking upon a subject like the present, the difficulties which oppose the arrival at a right conclusion, and the attaining of a course of action which shall be at once unitive and individual, seem almost insuperable. Human nature, so linked with things as they are, revolts against any proposed radical change. Interest, custom, prejudice, all are opposed to the man who is bold enough to say in the face of all, this is wrong. There is but one thing which can support a man under such circumstances,—the consciousness of internal purity of intention, and a

thorough conviction of the necessity for uttering his views of the matter. The present work was not undertaken willingly; not undertaken till after long self-questioning, and a deep sense of the burden laid upon the writer. As the work progressed the inquiries it demanded have not only increased this burden, but have also increased the strength of the conviction under which it was first commenced. With trust in God we pursued the investigation; and with increased trust in the same Power, we continue our labours.

The inquiry into the causes of scepticism has in some degree suggested its cure. The primal cause has shown in what direction we must look for the great means of restoration. The falseness of a church to its ideal being accepted as the great cause of the irreligion of a people, it follows that an actual realization—in as far as is possible with our condition—of that ideal will be the chief cure of the existing evil. To this we propose, then, to direct our first attention; reserving for after consideration some of the means by which such a realization may be materially assisted. At least, minds, which before passed over such questions with a passing remark at the enormity of the evil, may, perhaps, be induced to employ their energies to produce a better state of things, one more conformable to the spirit and genius of Christianity than at present distinguishes the world. One thing is certain—the heart will have spoken, and if it reaches other hearts, some good must result from the intercommunion.

CHAPTER I.

THE RESTORATION OF THE LOST IDEAL TO THE CHURCHES.

IF we look at the apostolic times, we shall find that Christianity had a vitality it no longer seems to possess. It may be urged in reply to this, that the Apostles were inspired men, and, therefore, are no standard by which to measure our present condition. To this we reply, that all men have the promise of assistance from the Spirit, which is inspiration, if they only faithfully believe and ask, and work. The Spirit is always one and the same. No age, no circumstance, no change of outward relations, can in anywise affect the immutable. If the Spirit no longer works in us, if the kingdom of God seems no nearer earth than it did two thousand years ago, it is because we have quenched, excluded, or resisted the holy influence; and not because it has ceased to watch for the open heart, to be ready for the yearning soul. The Spirit waiteth ever; is as potent, as inexhaustible, as when at Pentecost it visibly descended in the sight of man. No condition of society can possibly exist more diametrically opposed to the reception of the holy faith than what existed at the time of Christ; than that painted by Paul in the Romans. With all our sins, we are still very far from being so lowly sunk in sensuality

and beastliness. Yet in such an age, amongst such a people, was the word uttered, did Jesus preach, and the Apostles convert. In that age has Christianity the perhaps only perfect Church to which she can point. Can it then be supposed that the same faith is unable, if truly spoken and lived, to effect a complete change in the religious life of to-day; impotent to realize a Christian community among a people anxiously, ardently yearning for a better, nobler, purer state than at present exists! Assuredly not. But to do this presupposes much. There must be a consciousness that our life is not Christian first. To this consciousness we have pretty generally arrived. With this must also be vividly felt the impossibility of any return to old forms, to old authorities, to old organizations. The outward manifestations of every age are only fit for that age. Nay, it is greatly to be attributed to a too long adherence to these, that we owe much of our present barrenness of vital godliness. All such modes of manifesting the faith of a by-gone age are effete and dead. Nothing but a deep sense of the sad condition of to-day could have produced such a system as Puseyism. Our day, our wants, our necessities, must be consulted; must have a place in all attempts to invigorate the religion of our age. There is but one source whence this can be supplied. The life and death of the Saviour are the rule and guide of all times and peoples. The teachings of the Master are perennial. In every state and condition of man they are life-inspiring and healing.

Here we have an unchanging quantity, with the spirit ever-present in the conscience, by which to measure first our individual selves, and then the churches. Here, then, appears to me the centre of the whole question. Every member of a Christian church should test himself severely. Am I a Christian? should be the great question. Can I say of all my acts, words, thoughts, these are done for the glory of God and the welfare of man? Though we may not imitate the actions of the Master, yet we might use such a self-examination of the motives of all our actions conformable to the spirit of his life. We may question ourselves as to whether under such circumstances he would have done such a deed; or whether, under any circumstances, it is consonant with our profession, to do it. A doubt as to the rightness of our actions should always confirm us in rejecting them. Thus now, as ever, the first great requirement is individual perfectment. Pure members will make a pure body; Christian hearts, a Christian church. No matter where this reformation begins. Better, perhaps, if begun in those who have now power and influence over many. The ministers have here a notable work to perform. Regardless of all things but Christ and his kingdom, for every sin they should have a rebuke; for every misfortune, a consolation; for every suffering, a balm. Wealth should have no power to avert a condemnation, or to prevent an approval. God ever-living, ever-present, should they teach to man. Faithfully should they repeat the question of Paul, "Who

shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" This was once possible; is ever possible. What God has asked of man to do, he has given him the power to do. This we grant is a "hard saying." But be it remembered that, though "of myself, I can do nothing, yet, through God, I can do all." Every one convinced of the necessity of such a change, should be active in the work. In the Church of Christ there is no account of layman and priest. All should be priests to God. No want of the ecclesiastical fiction of ordination should deter any from speaking on this most vital topic. Were this so, we should soon find an entire change in the religious life of the country.

A church to realize its ideal must be the faithful exponent of the universality of its faith. Not the church of this or the other section of society; but active for godliness in every part. The sins of all must alike meet with reproof, the sorrows of all with consolation. In no case can the Church safely become the mere interpreter of metaphysical propositions on the one hand, nor the dogmatic assertor of any esteemed essential on the other. Becoming in a bad sense the servant of his congregation, we often see absolute truth and verity lost by the minister, through the "fear of man, which worketh a snare." We have our fashionable preachers, as well as our fashionable actors. Conventionalism has entered the Church and destroyed

its moral effect on its members. The dread of giving offence has caused many a soul to be false to his God. While in many cases the forms of social life have weakened the force of the teacher ; in others he has too much " minded high things, and too little condescended to men of low estate." In no sense is the Church the Church of the people. It must become so. Here again is the cure found in the realization of its lost ideal. The mass of the people are in all countries the poor. This, the largest portion, the Church neglects. No cure can be effected in their neglect of, and opposition to, religious influence, until it can be said everywhere, as it was in Jerusalem of old, " the common people heard him gladly." In this respect the churches have the farthest departed from their original practice and triumphs. To regain their lost position they must condescend to men of low estate. The feelings, the wants, the necessities, the sins, the sorrows, the sufferings of the people constantly tax their labours. Sympathy must unite them. The bruised heart should find its balm of Gilead there, though all the world beside refused to supply it. To the doubter they should be kind ; to the unbeliever charitable ; to the sinful attractive ; to the sorrowful consoling. Every phase of spiritual disease and suffering, should find, if not entire cure, at least medicinal care from their labours and love. In all cases should the ninety-nine folded sheep be left, for the sake of the hundredth wandering and lost one. Were this but so—and were believers but

faithful it would be so—we should soon cease to hear of the weakness of the churches, and complaints of their little influence over the hearts of the many.

The churches have departed from their ideal in their militant aspect. The early founders of Christianity but seldom attacked existing evils. They were contented with teaching positive truth, and leaving that to produce whatsoever results it might. They stayed not to calculate consequences; formed no organisation to carry out this object, or to destroy that. They uttered what was needful to form a perfect man in Christ Jesus, well knowing that the acceptance of this would necessitate the death of all inimical thereto. Christianity reversed the form of the decalogue. Instead of Thou shalt not do this, it declared what man should do to inherit eternal life. For Thou shalt not kill; we have, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;" well knowing that a law of negation is always less potent than one of positive act. If man love his neighbour as himself, he needs no law commanding him not to kill. So throughout all its commands. They are positive. Man is given somewhat to do, not told of somewhat which he must not do. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, &c.;" "Do unto others as thou wouldst others should do unto thee." "Be chaste, temperate, long-suffering, forbearing, full of love one toward another." This is its characteristic. All its parables are relations of something done; given as examples of what the Lord's followers should do in similar circumstances. The good Samaritan is

a perennial lesson of vital godliness. All are of a like character. We are to tend the sheep ; to love the poor ; to give our cup of water ; no list of vices and sins is given which we are commanded not to do ; but practical virtues are illustrated by parables of universal application enjoining upon his followers the performance of such positive acts in all times. Those who have studied human nature know how consonant such teachings are with man's whole state and condition. Yet the modern churches have reversed this order. Long and weary discourses of what we must not do ; in the place of applications of the beautiful and ever fruitful life of the Lord. We have receded to Jewry again. All things, the lowest part of our nature, interest, prejudice, self, are appealed to in the action of our churches, to induce men to accept the Gospel, forgetful that ever did Christ appeal to the higher, the diviner faculties of man ; to self-abnegation, sacrifice, love, as the only means whereby his teachings could conquer the world, and subdue the evil thereof. Were his spirit but present in our churches, such would be the course of their conduct. But it is not so. A weak adherence to certain outward and dead forms prevents the soul of the Faith from inspiring our modern life with the nobleness, the unselfishness, and purity which so distinguished the early Christians, and formed the highest types of human excellence. The militancy of the Church is not now directed against the evils of the world, but against all that threatens its own corporate existence ; and, in the endeavour to realize

a more vital religious life, a more practical faith, promises to remove clerical power and influence. The militancy now is against the secular education of the people, against political reforms, and social ameliorations. Instead of the spirit of Christianity entering and elevating the world, the spirit of the world has entered, depressed, and almost destroyed the spirit of Christianity. Yet might this be changed by a sense of its true relation to man and our times, and a complete carrying out of the principles resulting from such a sense. While they ignore and entirely neglect the nature of an age, that age will ignore and entirely neglect their voice. Under such relationship, or rather non-relationship, clamour is useless, and complaint vain. While it exists, the Church will be powerless, and the people unblessed. The great glory of Christianity is its adaptability to all times, all people, and all circumstances. It is all things to all men. This the churches have ceased to be. Living the past, thinking the past, teaching the past, they are with us, but not of us. When they clearly understand their mission, and faithfully fulfil it, they will find that religion has not lost its power; and that wherever it is no longer a living and practical influence, the churches and not the people, the teachers and not the unbelievers, are responsible for the loss of authority, and want of vitality. For such a disease, the cure is ready at their own hands, if they will but use it. By a faithful discharge of what all acknowledge to be their duties, it would be done. "In how many practical

ways," it has been well said, "might the fellowship of the Christian spirit be unequivocally shown and proved!—and in no other way can it be certainly shown at all. If the land was stirred from centre to circumference, by efforts and struggles to realize the Christianity of the Sermon on the Mount, to suppress sin, immorality, unbrotherly passions, unholy living, which are manifest infidelity—as it is for the sake of a doctrinal symbol, or a sacerdotal garment, what an expansion might there be of the spirit of Christ in sympathizing hearts, which theology now severs, and what a strengthening of that spiritual force to which God has entrusted the conquest of evil! Where multitudes are perishing for the bread of life, nay, famishing for the bread which perisheth itself, what is Christianity, the Church of Christ, the great spiritual power of the world, devising in its heart of hearts for the healing of the nations? Alas! it seems a bitter scoff to name the religious interests of the day—the Trinitarian controversy and the Apostolic succession. With these the Christian Church feeds the hungry, and clothes the naked, and opens the eyes of the blind, and preaches peace on earth. For these some contend all their lives, and some are persecuted, and some have to shrink away from all they have known and loved, and consume their hearts in lonely sorrow, and die almost doubting whether Christianity has blessed the world. Evil goes unchallenged, and sufferings unrelieved, and oppression unabated, and wrongs unredressed,—while free thought, in whatever close

connection with the love of God and the obedience of Christ, has the world's dread, fear, and scorn turned full upon it. Supposed error breaks Christian fellowship more than known vice. Heresy is questioned at the door, and turned back, while sin is free to pass into the sanctuary, and even lay its hands upon the altar. The great want of the Church in these days is a true test of spiritual fellowship,—the Christianity of the life of Christ, that would make each of us a brother towards men, a child towards God; and hear even from the lips of our forerunner these words, addressed to ourselves,—‘Brother! follower! let not your heart be troubled; live true, and trust your God.’”*

We might show how, in every part of the Church, its relationship with man and our times needs an entire change. But our purpose is only to indicate, and not exhaust, a subject of such wide extent, and universal application. We have seen how far the churches have departed from their true character in some of the most important of their duties, and by what means a remedy might be applied, and something towards a cure effected. We saw, first, how by making ourselves individually Christian, the churches must necessarily become so too. Here is the first great duty of the Christian world; the first great cure of the practical infidelity which exists in the churches. This applies only to the professors of the faith, and by them must be carried out. In

* Prospective Review, August, 1845.

relation to the people, the churches are not at present effective. They are not of the people. To be so, they must adopt an entire change in their course of action. The spirit of the early Church, under our new forms of life, our new wants, circumstances, and necessities, must animate, inspire, and vitalize their labours. As a church militant, we found their whole conduct reprehensible and unchristian; impossible to retain its present members, much less convert the world. In this respect too, an entire alteration is demanded, and a few suggestions have been offered as to how this may be effected. Before the churches can fulfil all that their own claim upon our support, and the sense of their duties warrant us in demanding, a few things are essential, which we now propose to consider.

CHAPTER II.

THE SUBORDINATION OF DOCTRINAL DISTINCTIONS TO UNITIVE ACTION.

IN nothing have the churches been so far wrong as in making opinion the bond of union. To this is to be attributed their present disintegrated condition, and the little real influence they possess. Sectarianism, controversy, feud, and persecution are its natural results. The making an agreement in metaphysical propositions the only permitted ground of admittance, not only to the kingdom of heaven, but to the spiritual fellowship of earth, has been productive of the most fatal results. Its impracticability has been sufficiently proved by experience. There is no church, no body of worshippers, in which such a union exists. The religious history of mankind declares the futility of such a demand. The most pious men the world has seen have been of every shade of opinion. The holy catholic Church contains in its bosom men of the extremest differences of interpretation and acceptance. There are found Athanasius and Channing, the two opposite poles of theological teaching. In what, then, consists their claim to saintship? It cannot be in opinion, for then the one or the other must be condemned. There must be a centre of union far

different from this, or men so entirely opposed in opinion could never be members of the same church. Yet they are so. Strict Trinitarians have canonized the Unitarian as a saint, and none will be so bold as to dare to dispute the justice of such a title. Here, then, is a clear case in which the churches are in direct opposition to their divine standard. The only thing ever asked by Christ and his Apostles was, that life should show whose followers the new converts were. No number of articles were ever offered them to sign before acceptance could be allowed to the fellowship of the community. The true idea of a church is altogether neglected and misinterpreted, when opinion has become its bond of union. Yet this is the only bond at present existing. The slightest difference of interpretation, nay, the least objection to a form of church discipline and government, is sufficient to create a division, in which the very laws of morality are unblushingly broken, and all religious forbearance sacrificed for victory and triumph. Dr. Arnold has truly said : "The true and grand idea of the Church, that is, a society for the purpose of making men like Christ, earth like heaven, the kingdoms of this world the kingdoms of Christ, is all lost, and men look upon it as an institution for religious worship, and religious instruction, thus robbing it of its life and universality, making it an affair of clergy, not of people ; of preaching and ceremonies, not of living ; of Sundays and synagogues, instead of one of all days, and all places, houses, streets, town and coun-

try." Nor is this surprising, when opinion and creed are made the test of a man's fitness for heaven. The golden measure of the Scripture, that those who love God and work righteousness are children of the Lord, is in nowise allowed. All this may be moral, good, and praiseworthy, but, unless accompanied by a right doctrine, a correct orthodoxy, is of no avail for the salvation of their doer. In the pitiful language of the religious, they are the mere rags of righteousness. Opinion is the grand panacea. Believe this, and nothing but this, or you cannot be of the Church of Christ. Men never did, never can agree in mere intellectual propositions. To make this agreement, therefore, the rule by which to measure the Christianity of a man, is entirely to destroy the genius, and to misdirect the tendencies of the faith. We have grown to be afraid of declaring ourselves simply Christian. We run about seeking some adjectival distinctions. I love all who love Christ, was the fine sentence of the Apostle. Now, we love all who love Christ according to some version. We are Christians according to Athanasius or Socinus; to Luther or Calvin. The making of opinion the bond of Christian fellowship has been the greatest hindrance to the acceptance of its teaching. While it continues, we labour in vain to Christianize the world.

The cure for this evil is readily pointed out. Alas, the churches will not so readily adopt it! Seeing that there can be no union in opinion, we should seek for it where it can be found. Happily

this is not difficult. There are subjects on which all agree as being Christian : here there is a common ground. The love of God, of man, charity, tending the sick, feeding the hungry, caring for the neglected, consoling the suffering, aiding the necessitous, reclaiming the erring and the sinful ;—these are acknowledged by all as of the first-fruits of the faith. The catholic Church throughout the world, in all times, under every varied form of doctrine, has ever united in paying tribute to such Christian deeds. This, which has ever been tacitly allowed, should be made, conscientiously and avowedly, the mark of a Christian man, the bond of union. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.” * Nothing can more clearly show the basis of a church as understood by Christ, than the above. Quotations without number might be given in confirmation of this statement. Every thoughtful reader of the New Testament will remember how frequently such passages occur. Nay, what is more to the purpose, the whole spirit of the Gospel is of the same nature. By their works shall they be known. Let this, then, which is tacitly allowed, be henceforth openly acknowledged as the great sign of a church of Christ. What united action would result from such an avowal being thoroughly acted upon ! Sectarianism would cease. Under

* Matthew vii. 21.

every variety of interpretation would dwell a united body, whose sole object would be the salvation of man, and Christianizing the world.

Here appears to us one of the chief means by which the Church can reach its own ideal, and become a truly vital power in the earth. May God, in his great mercy, hasten the day when such a united action shall bless the world !

CHAPTER III.

THE COMPLETE ALTERATION OF THE EXISTING UNION OF CHURCH AND STATE.

WE are not of those who deem there should be a total severance between religion and the State. Much rather would we have them in closer, firmer union than exists at present, or, under such a union as ours, ever can exist. Nothing can be sadder than the condition of our Church in its relation to the world ; no institution more impotent for good. The mere servant of the ruling powers, it has to bow its head to all the policy of temporal institutions and things of the day. Instead of being, as it should be, the guide of man through all the conditions of life, making politics holy, literature divine, and social life religious, it has shut itself up in its palace of pleasure and luxury, seeking to preserve its wealth and immunities, and therewith content to be the poor underling of state policy, and to sacrifice the eternal interests of man for a miserable life of ease and sloth. The Church should be above the State ; not in point of power requiring the arm of flesh for its support, but in its having but one Lord and Master, even Christ. Now such a State can never exist while the Church acknowledges a temporal prince for its head, receives its

creed from state counsellors, suffers its decrees to be altered or modified, the importance or non-importance of a doctrine to be decided, by officers of the crown. Such a union can bring nothing but contempt, produce nothing but discord. Instead of the State acting on Church principles, we have a Church subordinate to state dictation. The Church may declare the impiety of a certain proceeding, but it must obey. This is but justice while it acknowledges the State as its head, and receives its rations and pay from governmental favour, and that on purely political grounds. Such a union is sure to produce pluralities, simony, excessive wealth and extreme poverty, and all the evils consequent on such a state of relationship, as daily occurrences in the Church. The most fearful inequalities are sure to exist between reward and merit, as a minister, who should be removed above worldly interests in this sense, is a partizan of, or antagonist to, the party swaying the councils of the powers that be. Before religion can effect its great purpose on earth, these relations must be changed. Religion should be a controlling and guiding influence. In a Christian country the principles and teachings of Christ should be the regulators of all our actions. In trade, in commerce, in parliament, all should find in the holy faith its cause of action, and measure of right. The teachers of Christianity need more and more to imitate the example of Nathan, when he exclaimed to David, "Thou art the man!" But no: they dare not reprove. The bond of the world is

upon them. They are no more the servants of Christ, but the obedient servants of temporal powers and temporal wealth. Truth has ceased to be the great inspiring cause and end of action. If the Church produced martyrs now, it would be the martyrdom of men seeking to preserve their state and wealth, rather than of men willing to forsake all and follow the Lord. If the time ever existed for them to show of what stuff they are made, it is now. Yet no: having printed an immense number of letters, a few manifestoes and protests, it quietly goes on its way rejoicing in its fat livings and rich prebendaries. How are such things to be changed?

If there be that power and vitality in the Christian religion which we believe, it can only be done by an increase in the number of true believers, who shall labour earnestly and assiduously to destroy the present altogether reprehensible union of Church and State. The severance at first must be total and entire. Having done this, but little will be effected. One obstacle will have been removed, it is true; but, if nothing more were to follow, this would scarcely be worth the labour. It is true such a dissolution might produce more union among the various religious bodies, which in itself would be a good. Yet something more even than this is wanted. This more or less united Christian force must have one point of action, one end, and one aim. This end must be the entire absorption of the State, so that all the parts of the State shall be regulated on Christian principles. Such is the only union which

we believe can exist consistent with Christianity. We well know much has to be done before this can be effected. It is essentially a work of growth, of slow growth. Were it otherwise we should have little faith in its ultimate effects. Two thousand years have well nigh passed since the crucifixion. What have these centuries been, but one long continual preparation of soil for the reception of the seed? From what has been done, shall we doubt of what will yet be done? Much will have to be effected before even the ground is cleared for united labour.

Our ideal, then, of the union which should exist between a Church and State is not that of Rome, where a supposed infallible head of the Church is also a temporal prince; nor that of England, where a temporal prince is also the head of the State-Church; but a union thorough and entire;—one in which no line of distinction could be drawn;—where Church and State shall be one; inspired by the same spirit, acting on the same principles. This is possible only by absorption. The religion of Christ must permeate every department of life ere this can be; yet that it will be so—far distant and visionary as it now appears—we know. In this, as in all cases of God's dealings with man, HE uses human instruments for accomplishing his purposes. It behoves us therefore to seek these out, and to apply them. Here then we deem are two most potent auxiliaries for realizing in practice the Church of our ideal—the subordination of opinion,

as a bond of union, to that of works ; thereby rendering possible a united Church, and the abolition of the present anomalous relationship of the Church to the State ; which things, ideal as they may at present seem, we believe nearer realization than many are willing to allow ; for the sublime, iron hand of necessity will force a change, and compel a complete alteration in the influence and relation of religion to our times and their wants.

NOTE.

Nothing is more striking about the age than the common expression of its want. All men and all parties agree in the necessity of a change ; all differ in respect to the means required to produce it, and the kind of change needed. Some are for going back to the past ; and foolishly labour for the restoration of old church authority. Vigorous battles are fought on paper about candles at the altar, and whether they are to be lighted or not. The black gown has taken the field against the white. Artificial flowers are in array against natural. All these things, simple and puerile as they are, betoken a spirit of discontent with matters as they are, and a restless desire for a change. The Romanist is in the field loudly declaring the claims of his church, and its power to allay all differences, and settle all disputes, by its "one fold and one shepherd." Many, weary with the struggle and conflict, accept the conditions, and throw themselves on the bosom

of infallibility and Rome. Others cannot, dare not do this. With them there is something nobler than Romanism, something purer than the Vatican to be sought for and found. Amidst all this conflict the Anglican Church is impotent. The poor carcass of a long dead soul, it excites the pity of the Romanist, the contempt of the world. One has told them this in the following words: "We indeed *sympathize* with you in your distress, but we can lend you no assistance; for you lie beyond the pale of Catholic communion. *Your only resource is to return to* "THE ONE FOLD OF THE ONE SHEPHERD."* Brave John Milton saw and told them this long ago. Sumner tells them in another part of his sermon—"she owes her very being and existence to the State; and surely that authority which framed the Thirty-Nine Articles, and forced them on the English Church, does not exceed the limits of its power, when it changes and modifies the work of its own hands. It is now evident to all that the Anglican Church is the bond-slave of the State."† What can we hope for from such a teacher of the changeless faith of Christ?

* "The Unity of Government," &c.—A Sermon, by the Rev. R. SUMNER, T. J., p. 19.

† Ibid. p. 4.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RECOGNITION OF THE USE OF ALL OUR FACULTIES AS RELIGIOUS.

ALL things should be the handmaidens of religion. This, the highest manifestation of the divine in our natures, should use all the faculties for its glorification and honour. Whatever is noble, whatever is beautiful, in science, in philosophy, and in art, should be offered at the shrine of faith. That is the common centre to which all things should converge. This union of science, art, and philosophy, with religion, would complete the harmony of the universe, and be in accordance with man's nature. The war between them is of man's making, and not of God's. It has impiety written on its face. It is altogether anti-Christ; it is nowhere tolerated or sanctioned by religion. Its existence can only be injurious and malign; its continuance will but increase the evil. Every faculty, every power we have is given for high purposes; and their use is in itself religious. The teaching that practically denies them is imperfect; and imperfection in this case means more than in ordinary matters. A religion that does not accept the whole of our nature, and raise it, and elevate it from worldliness and selfishness to high and holy ends, is not, cannot be from God. All

who strive to retard such an acceptation are practical atheists. They make philosophy, art, and science, the antagonists of religion, when, in truth, they are its greatest supporters ; nay, are a part of religion. This the Church has never acknowledged, does not acknowledge now ; but, ere it can become a universal church, must. Its mission is this. The faithful fulfilment of it can alone ensure its final acceptation by the human race.

This, then, is our idea of the true condition of the Church in relation to science, and art, and philosophy. It should embrace them all. Poetry, and painting, and sculpture, should lay their tributes at its shrine, and be accepted. Philosophy should be welcomed as man's endeavour to read the wondrous nature with which he is endowed, and the mysteries of creation. Science, as the interpreter of the visible world, should be joyfully received, and all her teachings made subservient to the great purpose of blessing man. Every new invention, every fresh discovery should be used by the Church to increase the happiness, and lessen the inequalities of existence. The priest should bless all. The high-priests of nature should receive holy consecration. All knowledge may be made more than power. It is of God, and should return to God. Woe to them who, from interest or fear, turn it into another channel ! Let not man separate what God hath joined together. His word and his works are one. Having a different manifestation, they partake of one Spirit, one Creator, one God. He who inter-

prets the word, and he who interprets the work, have alike a holy function to perform ; and, if alike faithful, are alike ministers of God. Nothing shows more clearly how far the Churches have erred, than the infidelity of the great men of science. There should be, there can be, no war between them. Faith and philosophy, and science, are a trinity of holy powers, and should work together in amity, in peace, and in love. Were this but so, how much of the evil of the present disbelief would there not be destroyed !

We cannot close this chapter without saying a word or two upon the subject of the "Evidences." In their places, critical exegesis, historical evidences, arguments *à priori* or *à posteriori*, Clarke's and Paley's, are very good. But the very purpose for which these have been used shows that the Church has not understood its position in the world. All these things may help to confirm, but never generate a faith. To this its controversial part the Church, we think, has sacrificed too much of its time, talent, learning, and energies. Ages vary in their wants and necessities. What was perfectly in keeping with one, may be entirely out of all relationship to another. Such is the case in respect to this matter of the evidences. Our age requires not so much by what arguments of design and designer we prove the existence of a God, nor by what line of historic evidence we establish the truth of Christianity, as by what means religion and Christ may be made to bless a suffering generation. Here is a fundamen-

tal error. While the learned quarrel over an argument, or the correct translation of a Greek word, or the right rendering of a Hebrew numeral, the masses exclaim—Away with this nonsense and jargon; can religion bless us and ours? can Christianity remove the awful social inequalities under which we labour, the fearful burdens under which we groan? All things are beautiful in their season, and there is a time for all things; but to be quarrelling about texts and interpretations, and Trinities, and successions, and baptismal regenerations, while the people are thus exclaiming, is indeed a “sad mockery,” to be matched for its folly only by the disputes of the scribes and Pharisees in the olden time, and which found such rebuke from the mild tongue of the Saviour Himself. Verily such conduct is but offering a stone when the people ask for bread.

Scientific men have urged that the battle of the evidences must henceforth be fought on physical grounds. One of the most eminent and most pious has said, “Ere the churches can be prepared competently to deal with it, or with the other objections of a similar class, which the infidelity of an age, so largely engaged as the present in physical pursuits, will be from time to time originating, they must greatly extend their educational walks into the fields of physical science. The mighty change which has taken place during the present century in the direction in which the minds of the first order are operating, though indicated on the face of the country in characters which cannot be mis-

taken, seems to have too much escaped the notice of our theologians. Speculative theology and the metaphysics are cognate branches of the same science; and when, as in the last and the preceding ages, the higher philosophy of the world was metaphysical, the churches took ready cognizance of the fact, and, in due accordance with requirements of the time, the battle of the evidences was fought on metaphysical ground. But, judging from the preparations made in their colleges and halls, they do not now seem sufficiently aware—though the low thunder of every railway, and the snort of every steam-engine, and the whistle of the winds amid the wires of every electric telegraph serve to publish the fact—that it is in the department of physics, and not of metaphysics, that the greater minds of the age are engaged;—that the Lockes, Humes, Kants, Berkleys, Dugald Stewarts, and Thomas Browns belong to the past; that the philosophers of the present time, tall enough to be seen all the world over, are the Humboldts, the Aragos, the Agassizes, the Liebigs, the Owens, the Herschels, the Bucklands, and the Brewsters. In that educational course through which in this country candidates for the ministry pass in preparation for their office, I find every group of great minds which has in turn influenced and directed the mind of England for the last three centuries represented, more or less adequately, save the last. It is an epoch of all kinds of learning, with the exception of the kind most immediately required, because

most in accordance with the genius of the time. The restorers of classical literature,—the Buchanans and Erasmuses,—we see represented in our universities by the Greek, and what are termed the Humanity course; the Galileos, Boyles, and Newtons, by the Mathematical and Natural Philosophy course; and the Lockes, Kants, Humes, and Berkleys, by the Metaphysical course. But the Cuviers, the Huttons, the Cavendishes, and the Watts, with their successors, the practical philosophers of the present age—men whose achievements in physical science we find marked on the surface of the country in characters which might be read from the moon—are *not* adequately represented: it would be perhaps more correct to say that they are not represented at all; and the clergy as a class suffer themselves to linger far in the rear of an intelligent and accomplished laity; a full age beyond the requirements of the time. Let them not shut their eyes to the danger which is obviously coming. The battle of evidences will have as certainly to be fought on the field of physical science, as it was commenced in the last age in that of the metaphysical. And in this new arena the combatants will have to employ new weapons, which it will be the privilege of the challenger to choose. The old, opposed to these, would prove but of little avail. In an age of muskets and artillery the bows and arrows of an obsolete scheme of warfare would be found greatly less than sufficient in the field of

battle, for the purpose either of assault or defence." * Such is the opinion of one of the ablest geologists of the day. Perhaps his great love of science has caused him to place too great stress upon the subject of the evidences. However this may be, the great fact, the ignoring of science by the ministers as a body, is truthfully stated. If it were not so, the battle of the evidences would be of little moment. Spiritual influences are little aided by such guerilla warfare. If the Church fully accepted the religiousness of science, they would go hand in hand down the world, blessing and elevating its inmates.

For ourselves, as an intellectual pursuit, we value all learning, and all inquiry; but we think far too much stress has been laid upon the importance of reconciling a literal discrepancy, a disagreement of dates, and a variety in rendering. In the way of criticism, all this is well; but as matters for the conversion of mankind, as aids to spiritual growth, they are, perhaps, rather hindrances than helps; at least, their effect has been to deter many from Christianity. The religion, it is said, which requires such learning to examine its evidences, such leisure to establish its proofs, cannot be the faith revealed to a toiling, suffering people by an all-wise, all-merciful Father. Thus there is reason for the statement, that all the parade of learning which has

* Foot-Prints of the Creator, by Hugh Millar.

been made on this subject has been sadly misplaced and misdirected. Certainly, under similar circumstances, and in a similar state as respects its opponents, the Apostles give no warranty of such being the mode likely to win the world. It is true St. Paul was learned in all the learning of the Jews, but in no case does he make that learning the stumbling-block which modern theologians have done. Were a proper place given to all the acquirements and gifts of man, and a pure practice to the faith as it is in Christ, we should soon have little need for the "muskets and artillery" of spiritual warfare.

Thus in as brief a manner as possible, we have offered a few suggestions on this most important and difficult of questions. We do not believe the evils irremovable. All things are possible where there exists union and love. In effecting this, we have but simply to follow the very clear precepts of practical piety which the records of Christ's life contain, and about which there is not a single dispute. Were this but so, we should find all realized which we have shadowed forth as being required as cures for the far spread and still spreading disease of religious indifference. Then should we see the Church a community of individual Christians; the Church of the people; the teacher of positive truth. We should then have a due subordination of doctrinal points of severance to the true uniting bond of action and works. Doctrine acknowledged as concerning the relation of the individual soul to God of

the most vital import ; yet as differently received by Christians of minor importance to the Church. We should then no longer be disgusted by such a glaring mockery of all that is truly religious as the present law-church. Its days are even now numbered ; but not for an hour could it exist, if the principles of the Gospel were as well understood in practice, as they are in theory. These, with religion accepting philosophy, and art, and science—wreathing them as a beautiful garland for her august yet humble brow—would soon restore the hearts of the people, and ring throughout the world the glorious and final triumph of the Prince of Peace.

PART IV.

CHAPTER I.

RELIGIOUS SCEPTICISM ; ITS MISSION.

IF we look into the natural world, we shall find that all, the most minute and seemingly insignificant parts, have their purpose and use in the divine economy. The careful student soon detects that the lowliest objects of creation contain as indubitable marks of the power and attention of the Creator, as the most colossal ; and have a function to perform, which, being there, could not by any possibility be spared. Nothing exists in vain. What is here true of physical, may also be inferred of spiritual phenomena. We have seen that, all down the pages of history, scepticism, in some manifestation or other, has existed. That it has had some important mission to perform, we cannot for a moment doubt. We believe that, as storms, volcanoes, earthquakes, have all a great end to effect in the physical ; so infidelity, which, under its various Protean forms, may be named the spiritual storms, volcanoes, and tornadoes, with which man has to contend in his struggle with truth and falsehood, has a mission of its own, important for the well-being of man. Over

this, as over all the apparent evils of life, there is a superintending Providence, which turns it to good, and makes it subserve the cause of man, and the progress of the race. It is our duty, having inquired into its history, its cause, and uttered a few thoughts about its cure, to devote a few pages in endeavouring to ascertain what purpose God assigned this spiritual phenomenon in the general development of his plan.

The history of the past teaches us how invariably the symbols which the necessity of our nature forces us to employ as the outward expressions of an indwelling truth and belief, become corrupted, until they finally usurp the place of the thing symbolized, and receive the worship which is due to the underlying reality of which they are but the vestment and garniture. In no form of worship which man has adopted, to express his idea of God, and the "eternal sacredness of life," has this truth been negatived. Whether in ancient Jewry or modern Christendom, the fact is the same. Protestantism was the protest of modern Europe against this corruption. Puritanism was the cry of England against the subjection of the soul to worn-out and effete forms. That awful Revolution of 1793 was again the assertion of outraged humanity, that symbols lose their glory; forms cease to reveal their primal truth; and that once realities have and do become "shams and lies." The present confusion which dominates in every part of our life is another house-top preaching of the same thing. The strange utter-

ances of the evil, and the still stranger remedies offered, are all indicative of the one great feeling which agitates mankind. Things which to our fathers were vital and productive are now dead and corruptive. Nations grow out of their symbols as children out of their clothes. But in the world of spiritualism, as in the world of every-day life, there are always two powers struggling for rule. The one to hold things as they are, the other to progress. The tenacity with which conservatism retains what is old, is only equalled and surpassed by the enthusiasm and zeal with which reformers struggle for the attainment of their ideal. When a thing has become corrupt and corrupting, men will still struggle for it to the death; and even after conviction of its ceasing to be the thing it once was. In nothing is this carried to such injurious extremes as in religion. It is true there are more prejudices, perhaps more feeling, and certainly more self-interest to account for this. The very importance of the questions at issue, transcending as they do all that engages the hopes and fears of man, will in some measure account for the slowness with which necessary changes are allowed in the outward forms and manifestations of religion. Yet, whatever may be the causes, the fact is certain. We have seen religious institutions full of the vilest corruption; we have seen religious teachers leading a life of the lowest grossness, of the filthiest vice; men in the same hour teaching and mocking the mysteries of the faith they professed. The Church has had its high places filled by debauchees,

scoffers, and infidels; its offices discharged by men whose nights were spent in the brothel and the pot-house. Then came infidelity, declaring boldly all was a delusion, a falsity, and a cheat. It has often been like the Baptist of old, the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare the way for a better time, a purer state, and a holier living. In all cases the corruption of the Church is responsible for infidelity. It was this which produced Pomponazzio and the others in the time preceding the Reformation; and this, conjointly with infidelity, produced that great protest against untrue, and therefore unholy authority in spiritual matters. The evil church of James the First's time produced the vice and irreligion of his court, which raised the ire of a pious people, and ended in the glorious triumphs of Puritanism. The philosophy of Hobbes was the natural consequence of such a church and court as Charles II. The frigidity of the reigns of Mary and Anne, their conventionalities, and French etiquette will account much for the teachings of Gibbon and Hume. These, with the supineness of the Church, were succeeded by the glorious labours of a Whitfield and Wesley. In France the same course of recurring changes might be traced. Voltaire and the Encyclopèdists were but the results of a faithless church, of a vicious priesthood. The infidelity of the present day may be exactly measured by the apathy of the Church in doing the work they were set to do. The greatest amount of church-work is now being done by laymen, and those who refuse

allegiance to visible churches. Nearly the whole of our active charities originate in and are carried out by men, who are not only not of the Church but are opposed thereto. Here, then, we have a reason for believing that infidelity has a mission to perform. When the Church forgets its duty; when forms and symbols have ceased to be truthful; when the preacher ceases to instruct and bless; when the manger-born is so surrounded with gold, frankincense, and myrrh, that its voice no longer reaches the ear of the people; then infidelity, with its iconoclastic power, destroys the images which have so long befooled and deluded the world. It is true that to the greatest extent its work is destructive and negative. But such work is needed; and for such there is often too great a cry in the world. "The effect," says Morell, "of all scepticism is to send us back to first principles; so it was only a thing to be reasonably expected, that the bold and sweeping scepticism of Hume should give rise to a proportionate and thorough revision of the fundamental principles of human knowledge."*

There is recorded in Scripture the account of a well whose waters possessed medicinal qualities, but before such qualities could be manifested for healing purposes the waters must be disturbed†.

* The same author says, in another place; "scepticism, in its first aspect, is really nothing more than the common sense of mankind rising in rebellion against the authority of the current philosophy of the day."

† John v. 3.

Like the waters of Bethesda the religion of the world is sure to stagnate, become corrupt, and lose its healing properties, unless it be agitated and disturbed. It seems from the history of the past, that infidelity has been this agitating and disturbing force. That it has been so unconsciously and undesignedly, we allow. This alters not the fact. It has always served as a restorative; has sent men "back to first principles;" has necessitated a setting of the house in order; has roused the religious from their apathy and negligence, to a renewed energy and resuscitated vitality. This has been its constant and invariable effect. Hence we place as the great mission of infidelity the arousing of the Churches to a reconsideration of their principles of action, of their adaptability to, and conformity with the spirit of the age; and necessitating attempts renewed to regain their primitive purity of living, and holiness of working. It is the power which disturbs the waters of Bethesda, and gives force to its latent and otherwise unmanifested virtues.

Besides this, the great mission of infidelity, it has work of a minor and collateral effect, of not a little importance, which we shall do well to consider. In its desire to propagate its own ideas, and withdraw men from what Tacitus called the "*exitiabilis superstitio*" of Christianity, all the power of acute minds, united with much learning and research, have been employed to destroy the very basis on which the faith rests. To oppose this, believers have neither lacked learning, research, nor power. The

result has been, in every encounter between the opposing forces, a vast acquisition of strength to all the essentials of belief. Minute points, of seeming unimportance in themselves, have by their united effect produced such an overwhelming mass of evidence in favour of Christianity, that few impartial minds can resist. History, philosophy, philology, and science have been ransacked of their evidences, on the one side to oppose, on the other to support, the veracity of the Evangelists and Apostles, and the issue has been altogether in favour of the believer's views. This is a great acquisition; one which but for the attacks of doubters and unbelievers would perhaps never have been made. This, though of minor importance to that of arousing the Church to the carrying out of its divine principles, is a work of no little good in its ultimate effects on the truth. By such a course are believers enabled to give a stronger reason for the faith that is in them; and better prepared to meet the enemy on his own ground, and contend against him with his own weapons. Thus in many ways is infidelity destined to thwart its own ends. Yet may it console itself with this thought, that though never destined to destroy that religion which God has given for the guidance and salvation of man, it necessitates a purer manifestation, and compels a more energetic carrying out of its principles.

Gathered from history, this then appears the work which infidelity unconsciously, and undesignedly, has to do. The destruction of false

symbols and effete forms; the shattering of corrupt religious institutions and the unjust claims of priestly hierarchies; the "sending men back to first principles;" the arousing men from that lethargy into which they invariably fall when allowed to become the slaves of habit and routine; the awaking of zeal which, unspurred, is too apt to sleep and grow corpulent; the increasing our knowledge of the strength and force of the faith, by the inquiries which it institutes against its very basis, but which have hitherto ended only in its own discomfiture, and the glory of the religion attacked. Such, it appears to us, have hitherto been the results of the history and labours of infidelity. If we have correctly stated the case, few will not feel, and willingly allow that this, as well as all other apparent evils, is permitted by God, for wise purposes; and that, like all parts of the physical world, it is not produced in vain.

A few words in conclusion. For ourselves we have no fear for the triumph of Christianity, however strong the attacks which are made against it. It may suffer seeming temporary failure, but this will not prevent its final, more beautiful, more glorious, and more permanent victory. In all times its opposers have declared it to be worn out, dead, incapable of redeeming the world; its believers have foolishly lamented Christianity "ready to draw its last breath;" yet is it still potent to console, to inspire, and to bless. From Julian to Proudhon, its death has been declared at hand; but these prophets

have had the fate, but not the truth of Cassandra. They have been disbelieved, and have been also false. Its present condition may appear sad and gloomy. The auguries may not be cheering. Yet from its momentary obscurity will it again gladden the world with renewed splendour, and a brighter glory. The clouds which hide the mid-day sun will pass away, and a more gorgeous day succeed; the autumn storm which now hangs impending over its progress will produce but a temporary trembling and weeping, and be succeeded by a calm of continued glory and triumph. The bitter aspersions of the French open foe Proudhon, and the heartless logic of the German Strauss—who while he endeavours to undermine still eats his bread and drinks his wine—will alike not only pass harmlessly away, but leave it the more able to resist succeeding attacks, and to withstand succeeding invasions. Such is our firm faith. Christianity is of God; and like God is eternal! It will, sooner or later, embrace and bless the world.

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"It will be seen from these extracts that Theodore Parker is a writer of considerable power and freshness, if not originality. Of the school of Carlyle, or rather taking the same German originals for his models, Parker has a more sober style and a less theatric taste. His composition wants the grotesque animation and richness of Carlyle, but it is vivid, strong, and frequently picturesque, with a tenderness that the great Scotchman does not possess."—*Spectator*.

"Viewing him as a most useful, as well as highly gifted man, we cordially welcome the appearance of an English reprint of some of his best productions. The 'Miscellaneous' Pieces are characterised by the peculiar eloquence, which is without a parallel in the works of

English writers. His language is almost entirely figurative: the glories of nature are pressed into his service, and convey his most careless thought. This is the principal charm of his writings; his eloquence is altogether unlike that of the English orator or essayist; it partakes of the grandeur of the forests in his native land; and we seem, when listening to his speech, to hear the music of the woods, the rustling of the pine-trees, and the ringing of the woodman's axe. In this respect he resembles Emerson; but, unlike that celebrated man, he never discourses audibly with himself, in a language unknown to the world—he is never obscure; the stream, though deep, reveals the glittering gems which cluster so thickly on its bed."—*Inquirer*.





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